



Ardiansyah, W., Murwani.U., Nurul, A. (2021). Analyzing the effect of gender differences and education of parents towards students' reading comprehension achievement. *International Online Journal of Education and Teaching (IOJET)*, 8(1). 346-357.

Received : 12.05.2020  
Revised version received : 03.10.2020  
Accepted : 05.10.2020

## **ANALYZING THE EFFECT OF GENDER DIFFERENCES, AND EDUCATION OF PARENTS TOWARDS STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION ACHIEVEMENT**

*Research Article*

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## ANALYZING THE EFFECT OF GENDER DIFFERENCES, AND EDUCATION OF PARENTS TOWARDS STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION ACHIEVEMENT

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### Abstract

The aim of the study was to find out: students' gender differences, and parental education on students' reading comprehension achievement. The sample was 100 students and used purposive random sampling. Interview and the forty-item reading comprehension test of multiple choices were administered. In this research, One-way ANOVA was used to analyze the data. The first finding showed that females' reading comprehension achievement was higher than males'. The second finding showed that variable "fathers' level of education" and "students' reading comprehension achievement" was .029 categorized "weak". The third finding showed that the correlation between variable "mothers' level of education" and variable "students' reading comprehension achievement" was .530\*\* categorized "strong". The effect of mother's education occurred through the provision of literacy resources and reading activities. Mothers spent more time with their children at home, continuously nurturing them with practices such as reading, and holding discussions with them on how they handle their studies. While fathers did not involve themselves and became reluctant to help their children to do their schoolwork at home. Some stated that they were not lecturers and busy working to earn their families living. The study recommended that both parents should collaborate to create a reading atmosphere in their family.

*Keywords:* Gender, education of parents, reading comprehension

### 1. Introduction

Reading plays an important part in the education of individuals, especially students. Reading also makes a big difference to student's educational performance, and cannot be eliminated from the education process. Reading is a basic lifelong skill becoming a cornerstone for a student's success not only in school but also throughout life (Küçüköğlü, 2013). Without the proper reading ability, opportunities for personal fulfillment and job success will inevitably be lost. Reading provides an opportunity to develop students' minds and this helps them form enduring habits and character. Significantly that students should start to love reading right from the birth of a child and the book, can be considered as the third parent to the child (Willinsky, 2017).

Reading comprehension is commonly hindered when students lose interest and disengage from reading. Many students begin to dislike reading because they have to struggle to gain meaning from what they have just read. While research supports a strong correlation that students who like to read every day not only perform better in reading tests than those who do

not, but also develop a vocabulary mastery, increased general knowledge and a better understanding of other cultures. In fact, a student's reading engagement is more likely to determine whether a student does well at school than their social or economic background (Bohn-Gettler & Rapp, 2011).

The study focuses on differences between reading comprehension achievement of female and male students, and a relationship between parental education level and students' academic performances of reading comprehension. English lecturers generally acknowledge that students' environmental conditions that impact the students who try to read a passage can be a contributing factor in their reading comprehension achievement. Despite this, there is scarce research on the extent and the mechanisms by which factors related to a students' home environment influence their achievement in EFL. This means that English lecturers and State Polytechnic of Sriwijaya are left unguided in their quest to find ways of capitalizing on the influence of a home environment on students' achievement. In short, this article presents evidence concerning gender differences in reading comprehension achievement and the influences of parental education level towards students' reading comprehension achievement.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Gender differences in reading literacy

USAID (2016) reports that there are significant differences between male and female learners in reading comprehension. Female students outscored male students in their reading comprehension, in general. Female students are more interested in reading activities, while male students generally dislike reading activities. So, it does not wonder when reading comprehension scores of female students are higher than those of male students (Fahim & Barjesteh, 2012; Sotoudenama & Asadian, 2011)

A study conducted by Dagnev and Aster (2017) say those female students are more prone to the feeling disheartened and less hopeful than male students, more void of shame or self-respect, more deceptive, and of more retentive memory. On the contrary, males are expected to be objective, independent, assertive, logical, and competitive. Also, Junaid (2015) conducted the largest study of gender differences in achievement scores and found that girls performed better than their male counterparts in reading achievement. They also found the typical male student lags a year and a half behind the typical female student.

Male students considered mathematics, science, and sport as interesting topics while female students placed a higher value on reading. Learners' motivation to read is an area where consistent and substantial gender differences are found (Marinak & Gambrell, 2010). This characteristic is stronger among female learners than male ones. Motivation is the individual character that is supposed to play an important role in a learner's reading comprehension. The learners' success in the reading skill, according to Hairul, Ahmadi, and Pourhosein (2012), is associated with their motivation to read because it is regarded as an activity requiring deep involvement on the part of the readers. Besides, male students like monitoring their reading pace, reading strategies, and paraphrasing strategies more often than female students did.

In short, it stands to reason if gender differences are found in reading motivation and reading comprehension, then gender identity can explain more variance in these variables. It is also implied that gender identity may explain significant variances in the performance of learners in reading various text types.

## **2.2 Role of parental education level**

Parents' education, according to Khan, Iqbal, and Tasneem (2015), is a motivating force for a child which paves the way for his/her future. The children whose parents are educated get more confident, resourceful, and experienced than the children whose parents lack education. So it does not wonder that parents' education plays a vital role in a child's academic achievement and development.

Parental education may influence the willingness or ability of parents to become involved. Many studies have clearly shown that parental education plays a significant role in the amount of parental involvement. In addition, the higher the education level of one's parents the more likely one will have academic success.

In other words, parents with higher schooling placed greater value on education and thus provided more materials and school-related activities for their children. Kainuwa and Yusuf (2013) state that educated parents can be a second teacher for their children. And they can even guide and advise their children on the best ways to achieve good academic performance. And they will provide the materials their children need.

Mother's education on reading is stronger than that of a father's education. Mothers' education is related to their beliefs about reading, and then their beliefs are associated with the children's home reading activities (Marbuah, 2016). Also, it was found that maternal education level significantly predicted literacy belief, and facilitative mothers were more likely to have higher education levels. Mothers whose education are higher are seemingly to believe that reading is an enjoyable activity to do. College-educated mothers read their children more often, watched less television, participated more in structured activities, and got more involved in their children's schooling when compared with less-educated mothers.

## **2.3 Parental involvement and reading**

Parental involvement in literacy development is not an incidental one. The involvement of parents is a factor in determining the success of students. A student does not become literate on his own. He/she should receive help from parents. For this reason, the first teacher the student has is the parents and his first school is the home.

When students have experienced an early reading with their parents at home, it means that they have prepared themselves for the benefit of formal literacy instruction. Mudzielwana (2014) cites that reading activities at home accompanied by parents have significant positive influences such as reading achievement, language comprehension and expressive language skills, and students' interest in reading and attitude towards reading.

To conclude, parental involvement with students' reading activities at home has significant positive influences not only on their reading achievement and language comprehension but also on students' interest in reading, attitudes towards reading, and attentiveness in the classroom. Students also have a more positive attitude towards school and learning when parents become more involved in their education.

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Research design**

A cross-sectional research design was employed to see the differences of reading comprehension achievement between female and male students, and the parental education

level and students' reading comprehension achievement as well as the correlation of the two variables.

### 3.2 Instruments of data collection

There were two types of instruments for the study. The first was a forty-readymade reading comprehension test item of multiple-choice, and the second was Structured Questionnaires developed for quantitative data and administered to students with Cronbach's alpha of ( $r=0.78$ ). The questionnaire used in the research was adapted from Walker et al. (2005). However, the researchers modified the questionnaire by adding relevant questions and omitting several questions that were not necessary for supporting the framework of this study. All of the questions in the questionnaire were close-ended forms. Validity was checked by 11 English lecturers (5 from Sriwijaya University, 4 from State Polytechnic of Sriwijaya, and 2 from Polytechnic of Sekayu).

### 3.3 Study site

The study site was State Polytechnic of Sriwijaya in Palembang City. The students attending their education in this State Polytechnics of Sriwijaya come from different linguistics, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

### 3.4 The population of the study

The total number of population was 200 students from eight classes. The population of this study consisted of students in the fourth semester D IV at Public Sector Accounting and Business Administration study programs at State Polytechnic of Sriwijaya in the 2018-2019 academic year.

### 3.5 Sample of the study

To detect the sampling of the study, 100 students from eight classes that were chosen with the purposive random sampling method. The subjects were assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses in the study. Of the total, 51 students were male and 49 students were female.

Table 1. *Demographic profile of the participants*

Variable		n	%	
Age	Average	19.34 years		
	Range	19 years	66	66%
		20 years	34	34%
Study Program	Public Sector Accounting	50	50%	
	Business Administration	50	50%	
Gender	Male	51	51%	
	Female	49	49%	

### 3.6 Data collection instrument

#### 3.6.1 Demographic scale

The demographic scale (DS) developed by Anderson & Minke (2007) in Whitaker (2011) was employed. It deals with variables such as participants' gender, certain types of reading materials, and the participants' father and mother education level. DS was required to choose points indicating whether they had no education, below high school diploma, high school diploma, BA/BS certificates, or higher degrees.

### 3.6.2 Reading comprehension test

To measure the students' reading comprehension, the reading comprehension test was used. The test was in the form of a multiple-choice test consisting of 40 items. The obtained data of the reading comprehension test were collected within the frame of numerical information.

### 3.7 Data analysis

Data were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The questionnaires were analyzed quantitatively (statistically). All statistics were computed using the SPSS version 25. After coding all the items in the questionnaire, all the questionnaires were filled into SPSS coding sheet and data including scores of reading comprehension tests were then analyzed using a descriptive method, Correlation, One Way ANOVA as well as Frequency Percentage.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Results

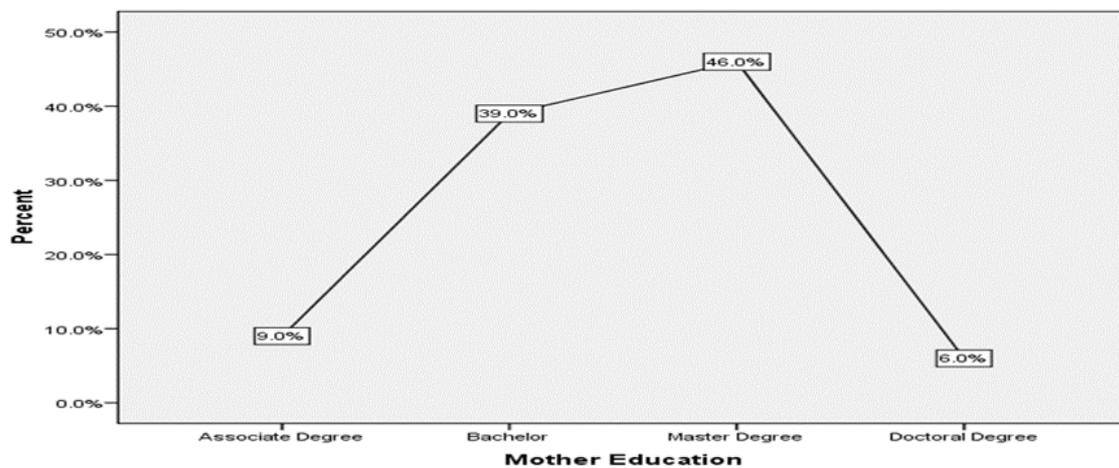


Figure 1. Mother Educational Background

According to figure 1 above, 100% of students come from literate (educated) mothers. That is 9.0 % of them completed an associate degree, 39.0% completed a Bachelor program, 46.0% completed a Master degree, and only 6.0% completed a Doctoral degree.

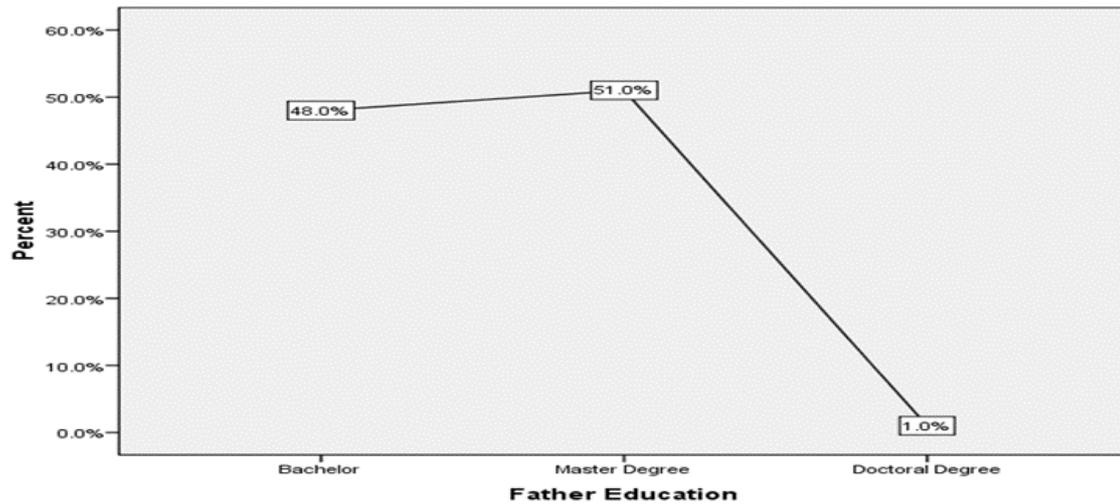


Figure 2. Father Educational Background

Regarding the father educational level, 100% of students come from literate fathers. Accordingly, 48.0% completed a Bachelor degree, 51.0% completed a Master degree, and 1.0% had a Doctoral degree.

Table 2. *Distribution of respondents on reading material*

Reading Material	Father (%)	Mother (%)	Students (%)
Novel	18.7	37.2	61.8
Short Story	17.2	29.8	57.1
Academic Book	11.4	35.4	78.3
Tabloid	10.2	19.7	19.2
Newspaper	53.4	49.7	40.3
Tabloid	9.2	20.7	19.2
Comic	2.0	2.2	45.9
Internet Article	45.2	54.4	52.7

Table 2 indicates different types of reading materials that respondents love reading. In this case, the writers can argue that students whose mothers love reading affect their students' reading interest. Father's reading preferences, though have had an impact too, influenced students' reading in fewer areas than that of the mothers.

Table 3. *Reading comprehension achievement between male and female (One Way Anova)*

		Descriptives		
		Male	Female	Total
N		51	49	100
Mean		6.2794	7.1582	6.7100
Std. Deviation		1.14088	.85649	1.09908
Std. Error		.15976	.12236	.10991
95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	5.9585	6.9122	6.4919
	Upper Bound	6.6003	7.4042	6.9281
Minimum		4.25	5.25	4.25
Maximum		9.25	8.25	9.25

Table 4. *Test of homogeneity of variances*

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
4.453	1	98	.037

The result of the analysis of females' achievement and males' achievement on total score shows that females are outperforming males ( $7.1582 > 6.2794$ ), in which the mean value of females is higher than that of males. The standard deviation value of males' scores is higher than females' deviation ( $1.14088 > .85649$ ). It means that the variation in males' scores is higher than the variation in females' scores.

Test of Homogeneity of Variances used Levene Statistic to assess the equality of variances for a variable calculated for two or more groups. Levene's statistic score is 4.453 with the level of significances 0.037. Since probability  $0.037 < 0.05$ , all variants are not identical.

Table 5. *Summary of Anova*

ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	19.297	1	19.297	18.856	.000
Within Groups	100.293	98	1.023		
Total	119.590	99			

According to the above table, the Summary of ANOVA showed that there was a significant difference in reading comprehension achievement of students ( $0.000 < 0.05$ ) between female and male students.

Table 6. *The correlation between mothers' education and students' reading comprehension achievement*

<b>Correlations</b>			
		Reading Score	Mother Education
Reading Score	Pearson Correlation	1	.530**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	100	100
Mother Education	Pearson Correlation	.530**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100

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

As shown in the above table, there was a positive strong correlation between students' reading comprehension score and mother's education. The value of  $r = 0.530$ ; this shows that mother's education is positively correlated with students' reading comprehension achievements. There was a strong correlation between the two variables (mother's educational level and students' academic performance).

Table 7. *The correlation between fathers' education and students' reading comprehension achievement*

<b>Correlations</b>			
		Reading Score	Father Education
Reading Score	Pearson Correlation	1	.029
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.778
	N	100	100
Father Education	Pearson Correlation	.029	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.778	
	N	100	100

The above table showed that the correlation between students' reading comprehension score and father's education is not strong (weak). The value of  $r = 0.029$ ; this shows that a father's education is not positively correlated with students' reading comprehension achievements. There was a weak correlation between the two variables (father's educational level and students' academic performance).

## 4.2 Discussion

The main concerns of this study were to examine the differences in reading comprehension achievement between female and male students and a relationship between parental education and students' academic performances of reading comprehension. Concerning these, the findings indicated that female students' reading comprehension scored significantly higher than male students', and the existence of the positive strong relationship between mothers' education level and students' academic performances of reading comprehension. These results suggest that the higher frequency of reading and better reading ability could be an explanation

for girls' more positive attitude to reading, and parental education is an important variable for predicting students' academic performance particularly reading comprehension courses.

The findings of the current study are also in agreement with Aditomo and Hasugian (2018), Asgarabadi et al. (2015), and Martinez (2014) which support the ideas that female students significantly outperform the males in the comprehension of the reading texts. These findings also seem to be consistent with a study conducted by Khodadady and Alaei (2012), which found that mothers' educational level invest their knowledge in their children's educational success in the form of reading comprehension achievement.

## **5. Conclusions and Recommendation**

### **5.1 Conclusions**

1. Parental education influences literacy outcomes in a foreign language.
2. Female students are more skillful in understanding reading comprehension compared to male students.
3. Mother educational level was strongly correlated with students' academic achievements.
4. Father's educational level was not strongly correlated with students' academic achievements.
5. Educated parents positively influenced children's schooling.

### **5.2 Recommendations**

1. Parents should give attention to their children's achievement by giving good guidance about the good ways of learning. They also should not only give attention continuously toward children's time in learning but also build children's consciousness on the importance of learning as a necessity.
2. The next researcher is suggested to conduct a further study that can enhance this research because this research actually can be broadened and extended to other subjects and in a different setting.

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