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# Factors that Promote Reading for Pleasure

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## Language and Literacy



## Introduction

Reading for pleasure has been defined by the National Literacy Trust as “reading that we do of our own free will, anticipating the satisfaction that we will get from the act of reading. It also refers to reading that having begun at someone else’s request we continue because we are interested in it” (Clark & Rumbold, 2006). Deprived areas within the UK have been highlighted due to a negative correlation between reading enjoyment in secondary school children and their social class (FSM statistics). Research suggests that the frequency of reading in children aged 8 -16 years influenced their overall enjoyment with individuals that read every day more likely to state they enjoy reading ‘very much’, with 30 minutes the most commonly cited length of time for young people to read for (Clark, 2011).

Previous research found that males aged 11-16 years old have the lowest reading enjoyment compared to other age and gender groups within the UK, with girls in England scoring significantly higher (566) than boys (551) in the ‘Progress in International Reading Literacy Study’ (PIRLS) (McGrane et al, 2017). Other characteristics that can also influence PIRLS performance include: the number of books the pupil reported having at home, eligibility for free school meals, age, and the historic performance of the pupils’ schools in Key Stage 2 assessments (McGrane et al, 2017) with international evidence suggesting that reading for pleasure and reading engagement are strong predictors of reading attainment (Cremin, 2020). From the age of 11 to 15 years the gap in reading levels increases between male and female students, with female students on average having a higher reading age than boys (Cooper, 2020). The reading habits for male and female students also differ with girls more likely to read fiction or magazines, and boys more likely to read newspapers or comics (Ho, & Lau, 2018) with evidence that boys are reading nearly as much as girls, but the reading is easier (McGeown et al, 2016).

Clark and Rumbold (2006) identified benefits to reading for pleasure such as: Reading attainment and writing ability; Text comprehension and grammar; Breadth of vocabulary; Positive reading attitudes; Greater self-confidence as a reader; Pleasure in reading in later life; General knowledge; A better understanding of other cultures; Community participation; and a greater insight into human nature and decision-making. Secondary schools in the UK teach a mandatory curriculum with students completing at least 5 (Service, 2014) GCSEs in years 10/11. Emphasis is placed upon technology or sport being enjoyable in students' spare

time, allowing individuals to form social groups in which they have a shared interest rather than individual tasks such as reading which requires no social interaction. Taking the statistical decline into account for the enjoyment young adults (aged 11-16 years) get from reading and personal drive to read in their free time, an intervention could be put in place that aims to improve reading for pleasure rates.

Pilot tests should be completed prior to the intervention to provide the students POV and tailor the intervention to the individuals providing a person centred approach. The proposed intervention would then take groups of male students aged 11-16 years old that have volunteered or been recommended by their teacher, placing them in focus groups of up to 10. These groups would meet once a week in evenings or on a weekend at a library, ideally within walking distance and free to use, since previous data has suggested young people that use public libraries are nearly twice as likely to be reading outside of class every day (Clark and Hawkins, 2011). Each student would bring to week 1: a book, magazine, or comic (other reading material could also be suggested) which their peers would then take home and read. Week 1 would allow students to share why they brought their reading material and to plan the following weeks giving them a chance to express their own thoughts in a safe, non-pressurised environment in regards to the intervention as a whole. If an individual does not have a predetermined reading material, ideas will be presented to them based on their personal interests. Each week would involve discussing the reading material brought forward one by one so that they could analyse this with guidance from a volunteer which could then be applied to their future studies. This intervention could be incorporated into schools however in order for the intervention to have the best effect participants should feel no external pressure to take part instead: learning to love reading, not having to read due to academic requirements. The intervention would run over 12 weeks with the last week allowing students to give feedback regarding how it may be improved via a Likert scale questionnaire. Although the intervention would aim to target the students' attitude towards reading there could be further positive implications to their participation, such as their interaction with peers providing them with a sense of belonging, their academic performance improving and students having access to a safe space.

In summary, individuals educated in deprived areas of the UK need to be motivated to read by accessing resources and opportunities (Schraw et al, 1998) which can have a positive influence on their academic attainment (Clark, C. 2011). Findings suggest a positive relationship between reading ability and success in GCSEs, with the link between good reading and good grades higher in maths than in English literature (Cooper, M. 2020). Interventions such as these could provide a better understanding of how reading enjoyment influences an individual but also what steps could be taken within the curriculum to tackle this problem further, closing the achievement gap in all subjects, not just English. Further research could also explore the influence that different reading materials have with each group focusing on a specific type of book to identify further gaps in reading enjoyment.

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