# Effects of Fathers' Level of Education on their Children's English Reading Performance

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#### **Abstract**

The purpose of the current study was to investigate the effects of father's education level on their children's English reading performance at the primary level. We collected data from 436 students of grade five from schools in Southern Punjab, Pakistan. Student's reading achievement was compared with four levels of their fathers' education (Illiterate, Primary, secondary & post-secondary/tertiary). English reading fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary were assessed by applying a reading scale. One-way ANOVA and t-test were applied for calculating results from the data. The results indicated that the post-secondary or tertiary level of fathers' education has a significant effect on the English reading performance of their children. The children of illiterate fathers got the lowest score as compared to the children of primary education fathers. It was noted that the higher the level of fathers' education the greater would be their children's English reading performance. The gender-wise comparison showed that fathers' education was positively correlated with their girls' children's English reading performance. The reading scores of the daughters of educated fathers were better than the reading scores of boys students of fathers' possessing the same level of education.

Keywords: English; Reading; Punjab; Illiterate; Education

#### Introduction

Research demonstrates that reading literacy has become an important element for achieving standard education across the globe (Nawaz, 2019).

Reading and learning are active mental processes where an individual decodes symbols either in verbal or textual form to get meaning (Ahmad et al., 2022; Pesu et al., 2016). Studies (Iqbal et al., 2021; Puccioni, 2018) indicated that reading is almost the best factor for language development and an important determinant of academic achievement. Reading is also a fundamental skill for students' educational success at school as well as in the whole life (Rasinski et al., 2017).

Aditomo and Hasugian (2018) attempted to claim that children with better reading skills in early grades are expected to perform better in later level of education. Hanemann (2015) also agreed and believed that reading is a good determinant of academic success which entices students for lifelong learning. Reading is an important factor for achieving information (Butler & Le, 2018). Previous studies (Bano et al., 2018; Butler, 2015; Jaiswal & Choudhuri, 2017; Van Houdt et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2020) demonstrated that parents' education is positively associated with their children's academic achievement. Educational achievement is the determinant of a better living for an individual to reside in the society (Amuda & Ali, 2016). Various factors contribute to develop children achievement. Among them one of the important factors is reading (Mancilla-Martinez & Lesaux, 2017). Boonk et al. (2018) illustrated that reading needs considerable practice and activities to be performed therefore both school and home reading are necessary for becoming good readers. Literature indicates different aspects that contribute for enhancing reading speed and accuracy of learners. However, involvement of parents is crucial for their children reading and language development in early grade level (Ludeke et al., 2020).

Parents' education level has been positively associated with the educational achieving of their children revealed by researchers (Pan et al., 2017). The education which is an important factor for information gaining starts from home as children firstly learn something from their parents who are their first teachers (Hafeez et al., 2020). Educators observed that children of illiterate parents' lake good reading, vocabulary and writing skills. Hence, they have limited opportunities of success in academic field that lead them towards failure (Berardi, 2009). On the other, parents' help and support in early years, encourages their children in reading and they become struggling and successful readers (Wolf et al., 2017). In this regard

for successful schooling, reading is most important skill (Weda et al., 2018).

### **Problem Statement of the Study**

English being an international language is an important parameter for the academic performance across the globe especially in EFL countries. The regions where English is taught as the second language create problems for the learners especially at the early grades. The learners at the early grades face a lot of problems in English reading and writing due to the second or third language. Moreover, the father's educational level may influence the performance of learners of early grades in English writing and speaking. There are many locations in Pakistan where fathers of English learners are illiterate or have primary level of education. There is need of time to determine whether the father's educational level effect on the performance of learners in English or not. So, the objective of the current student was to determine effects of father's level of education on their children English reading performance.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The problem under study was to determine the effects of fathers' level of education at their children's reading achievement in English language. We attempted to identify that either father's level of education has a considerable effect on their children's reading achievement. The main objective of this study was to explore the effects of fathers' education level on their children's reading performance of grade five students at primary level.

#### **Literature Review**

Lyon, (2016) opined that complementary skills of children are mainly developed through reading. Skillful reading can develop various other skills like writing and intellectual abilities in students. McPike, (1995) called reading a gate way to knowledge that leads toward other types of skills. Evidences show that early school years are significant effects on later performance of children in reading (Tatum, 2005). Various factors contribute in this process of learning to read (Franceschini et al., 2017). Iwaniec, (2020) believed that mother's education is a valid contributor for developing reading skills. The reason may be children's closeness with their mothers. They communicate with their mothers, discus and talk different tasks at home and share various reading activities.

Studies (Graham et al., 2018; Reilly et al., 2019) showed that mothers possessing high school and tertiary education have positive attitude towards reading books at home. They also share literacy activities with their children at home. In this way their children benefit from them in acquisition of language and reading. Parents help is for developing their reading achievement has been emphasized by different researchers. For example, Kraft and Monti-Nussbaum (2017) has observed positive impact of parent's support on their children reading scores. Amin et al. (2018) suggested that parents' early attention in reading literacy improvement of their children would predict their success in later grades. According to Kim & Bang (2017) students whose parents contribute minimum time for their children reading development are more likely to face reading difficulties than those children whose parents spend more time and devoted for their reading improvement. Fontana (2017) illustrated that there is significant association between parental education and their children's reading outcomes. Parents with higher education give much importance on education and provide more reading materials and school related activities for their children than parents with lower education level.

Researchers identified five fundamental elements of reading, namely phonics, phonemic awareness, oral fluency, reading vocabulary and reading comprehension (Cimmiyotti, 2013; Strouse & Ganea, 2017). These are basic building blocks of reading. First three components are namely developed in children's early years of schooling (Zhou et al., 2018). Lui et al. (2019) stated that phonics and phonemic awareness are valuable strategies for improving children's ability to recognize words and decode text. Reading fluency is grasping and reading the textual material with correct pronunciation rapidly and clearly. It is in fact decoding of symbols and words (Fang et al., 2018). Comprehension and vocabulary are rather difficult elements of reading (Erdener & Knoeppel, 2018). Comprehension in reading is grasping meaning from the text and reading vocabulary is useful for improving to understand meaning of words (Gunderson et al., 2018). Previous studies (Barnes & Puccioni, 2017; Whitten et al., 2019) showed that in schools where reading is taught regularly by the teachers throughout the academic year always imprint positive effects on students' literacy development. Teachers use various comprehension techniques for improving reading (Afflerbach et al., 2008). Commonly students learn

reading better through individual teaching style of comprehension (Gilkerson et al., 2017). York et al. (2019) illustrated that teaching comprehension develops understanding of thinking among learners and they become strategic learners. It is because without comprehension students face problems of learning things deeply. Through comprehension students get sense of the text (Moreno-Herrero et al., 2018).

Azad & Rashvand Semiyari (2020) noted significant influences of parent's literacy abilities in reading improvement of their children. Parental involvement plays an important position in students' academic achievement. They found in their studies that mother's education has greater effects on their children reading scores as compared to their father's education. Gladstone et al. (2018) also observed positive effects of parents' education on the reading achievement of students of grade two. According to Del Río et al. (2017) children whose parents possess post-secondary level of education above the high school have more academic scores than the students whose parents do not. Nic-Fhlannchadha & Hickey (2019) conducted a study on reading and found that a code emphasize technique was helpful for students' reading improvement. The code emphasize method is a basic method of reading which needs students to learn particular set of words or codes for early reading skills. They concluded that code emphasize approach can even improve reading speed and comprehension as well. Hence this is successful approach in reading and language development.

#### **Research Questions**

- **1.** Does father's educational level affect their five grade children's English reading performance?
- **2.** What is the difference between English reading performance of boys' and girls' students in relation to their father's educational level?

# Methodology

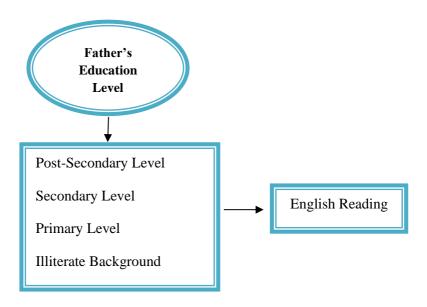
# **Research Design**

The present study entailed quantitative research design. It is because the questions of the study needed numeric outcomes (Field, 2013). The study was carried out in four districts of Southern Punjab (Multan, Layyah, Rajan Pur and Dera Ghazi Khan) Pakistan. People from different clans and

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different socio-economic status are found there. Furthermore, the inhabitants of these regions were from different backgrounds. For these reasons, the region was considered to be suitable for this study. The sample of the study was 436 (male/female) students. The gender participation rate was boys n=228 & girls, n=208 52% boys and 48% girls. The sample was taken from five grade students of the public primary schools of four districts of Southern Punjab, Pakistan. Schools were chosen through convenience sampling technique. However, volunteer students were included for taking reading performance assessment. Research tool of the article was an English reading achievement scale, developed for five grade students. The data was collected personally by the researchers.

Figure 1
Conceptual Frame work of the Study



#### **Instrumentation and Data Collection Process**

The instrument used for this research study was an English reading scale for students. Students' reading success was assessed by examining reading fluency, comprehension and vocabulary tests at the 5th grade level. All the tests were combined in a single reading scale. The reading scale was consisted of two reading passages from students' 5th grade English text

book. The first section of the scale contained demographic information and reading passages. The next section consisted five multiple choice items from passages for assessing reading comprehension and the last section was matching columns for measuring reading vocabulary. This was a 100 marks English reading assessment scale for 5<sup>th</sup> grade students. 80% marks were given to two oral reading passages, 10% for reading comprehension and 10% weightage was given to reading vocabulary. Students were assessed individually.

The data like fathers' education level their residential background was filled by the information given by the students. Students were asked about their fathers' educational level, illiterate, literate, secondary, and other, residential background; rural, urban, gender, on an interview sheet. They were given oral reading scale and asked to read a passage for assessing their oral reading fluency. They have to complete the reading sheet in a given time. Their mistakes were recorded on another reading sheet. Each missed word was subtracted from the total score of the oral reading scale which contained 80 marks. The time for administering of oral reading fluency card was 10 minutes for a sing student. After those students reading comprehension and vocabulary were assessed. Students were asked to encircle the answers of reading comprehension multiple choice questions. They were advised to match columns for reading vocabulary.

#### Results

The table 1 shows that there were four groups. In these groups students' fathers' education level has been described. There is a group of students whose fathers were illiterate. This group has been compared with the three groups of students whose fathers were either literate or possess secondary or tertiary level of education. It has been observed that fathers' education has a significant effect on the reading achievement of their children.

 Table 1

 Students' Fathers' Education Level and their Academic Achievement

Parent's educational	N	Students Reading	SD	F	P
level		Achievement Mean			

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Post-	53	66.83	21.68
Secondary/Tertiary			
Secondary	93	60.23	25.93 3.57 0.014
Primary	133	56.65	25.69
Illiterate	157	54.20	26.87
Total	436	57.78	25.93

P value is significant at level .05

The data show that the lowest mean (M=54.20) belongs to the students of illiterate fathers. The mean score of students reading performance increases as their father's education level increases. It is meant that fathers' illiterate background affects their children reading performance negatively and their highest education level affects their reading performance positively. Finally, the students of highly educated fathers got highest mean score (M=66.83). The descriptive further shows that there was a significant relationship between fathers' education level and their children reading achievement.

Table 2

ANOVA for Multiple Comparisons of Fathers' Educational Level and their Children Reading Achievement

(I)Fathers' Education	(J) Fathers' Education	Mean Difference (I-	P
level	level	$\mathbf{J})$	value
Illiterate	Primary	-2.443	0.851
	Secondary	-6.065	0.273
	Post-Secondary	-12.626*	0.011
Primary	Illiterate	2.443	0.851
	Secondary	-3.622	0.725
	Post-Secondary	-10.184	0.072
Secondary	Illiterate	6.065	0.273
·	Primary	3.622	0.725
	Post-Secondary	-6.561	0.449
Post-Secondary	Illiterate	12.626*	0.011
	Primary	10.184	0.072
	Secondary	6.561	0.449

Tukey (HSD) The mean difference is significant at level of 0.05.

One-way, Post Hoc analysis of variance (ANOVA) was also applied to detect the difference of the students score with varying fathers' education level. We discovered that that there was significant difference between the reading performances of those students whose fathers possess post-secondary or tertiary level education and the students of illiterate fathers. The performance of students whose fathers have post-secondary or tertiary level education was significantly better than the students of students whose fathers were illiterate.

Table 3
Gender Wise Comparison of Students Reading Performance versus their Fathers' Education Level

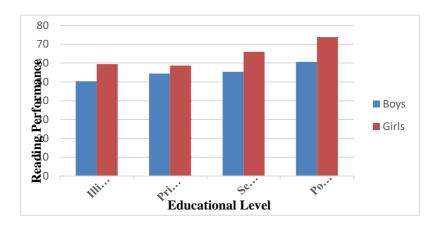
Fathers Education Level	Gender	N	Mean score of students on reading scale (M)	t	p
Illiterate	Boys	90	50.30	2.13	.02
	Girls	67	59.45		
Primary	Boys	64	54.44	0.96	.167
•	Girls	69	58.70		
Secondary	Boys	47	55.34	1.99	.022
	Girls	45	65.98		
Post- Secondary	Boys	28	60.64	2.28	.014
	Girls	25	73.76		
Total	Boys	229	53.76	3.49806	.000
	Girls	207	62.63		
Grand Total		436	57.78		

The result is significant at p < .05.

The table 3 shows that total 436 boys and girls of grade five students participated in an oral reading assessment scale. The mean score of their cumulative performance was M= 57.78. Their reading scores have been compared in four groups; illiterate, primary educational level, secondary educational level and post-secondary/ tertiary educational level. Here we compared reading scores of boys' and girls' students on the basis their fathers' educational qualification. It is concluded that students (boys/girls) with their illiterate fathers' girls' students' performance was better with the significant p value of .02. But there was no considerable difference between the performances of students (boys/girls) whose fathers possessed primary educational level. The reading scores of girls' students whose

fathers possessed secondary level education were better than possessing the same education level of the boys. The p value .014 was statically significant. The girls' students of the fathers with post-secondary or higher level of education also showed better progress than the boys whose fathers owned the same level of education. So, it was realized that father's education more positively affects their daughter reading achievement. The comparison of boys and girls English reading performance and their father educational level are shown in figure 2.

Figure 2
Comparisons of Boys' and Girls' Students Reading Performance



#### Discussion

The proposed study was to investigate fathers' level of education related to children's reading performance at primary level. For this purpose, grade five students were chosen for sampling. The students were divided in four groups (students whose fathers were illiterate, primary, secondary education and post-secondary or tertiary education). First research question was (i) Does fathers' education level affect their grade five children's English reading achievement? Here comparison was made by using One Way ANOVA. We observed that children of illiterate fathers got lowest scores (M=54.20) on reading performance scale as compared to the children of primary and higher level of fathers' education. The children of primary and possessing secondary education performed better with

mean scores M=56 and M=60 respectively. Similar to our study (Cheung & Wong, 2021; Inoa, 2017; Knauer et al., 2019; Reglin & Cameron, 2012) also determined the effects of parents' involvement on reading achievement of their children. The findings of current articles are compared with the results of the previous study because the results of study suggest that students who receive help and involvement at home from their fathers have higher reading achievement scores than those students who are not provided the positive involvement by their fathers.

The second research question was (ii) is there any difference in the intensity of the level of father's education at their sons' or daughters' reading achievement at grade five level? It was found that those girls' students whose fathers with post-secondary or higher level of education also achieved better progress than the boys whose fathers possessed the same level of education. So, it was noted that fathers' education more positively affects their girls' English reading achievement.

### **Research Implications**

The results of the study will be useful for teachers, school managers, and parents of the students. It is because these findings may help them to improve English reading of the students. Furthermore, the study may help school administrators for planning purposes of the educational needs of students. It is suggested by the research study that teachers should be aware about the students whose parents are illiterate. It is because through this study we observed that children of illiterate and less educated fathers are not fluent and good readers as compared to those children whose parent have post-secondary or tertiary level education. Hence teachers should give more attention to the students reading development of those students whose parents are illiterate. Parents should give time to their children at home to improve their reading ability. During teaching, English teacher should make reading comprehension easier and more interesting.

# **Limitations of the Study**

The current study was conducted on the grade five students of public schools situated in the districts Multan, Layyah, Rajan Pur and Dera Ghazi Khan of southern Punjab, Pakistan. So, the results of the current study are

only generalized for the public schools situated in these districts of southern Punjab, Pakistan.

#### Conclusion

The research article investigated the influence of fathers' educational qualification on English reading achievement of grade five students. Study revealed that highly educated fathers' do better for their children. The results showed that educated fathers help their children for improving their education by providing them with better assistance for their studies. The results of the present study reflect that there is a significant effect of fathers' education (post-secondary or tertiary) education on the English reading achievement of grade five learners. However, this is a single factor. There may be the effect of other factors like mother's education, socio economic background and family factors that contribute to the English reading achievement of the learners. So, the concept that fathers educational level affects positively on the achievement of their children is true in this sense because the result of the article correlates with this saying. It was also noted that through the current study that girls' students performed better than boys' students of the sample. Finally, the research has suggested that educated fathers have more focus on their children's English reading performance and give more time at home as compared to fathers have less education level.

#### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declared that they have no conflict of interest.

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