

The effects of mentoring programs on primary students' enjoyment of reading

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ABSTRACT

Mentoring programs in education are known as the involvement of experienced persons to support students' learning. Concerning improving literacy, mentoring programs aim to help students understand reading materials and improve their reading enjoyment and behaviors. This research aimed to investigate mentoring programs' impact on primary students' reading enjoyment. This study, in particular, intended to probe whether the mentoring programs significantly affected students' reading enjoyment, whether male and female students differed on their reading enjoyment after getting mentoring intervention and whether the periods of mentoring impacted students' enjoyment of reading. The study used secondary data of the *Time to Read Program*, a volunteering program conducted in Northern Ireland held by the Business in the Community in cooperation with Education Authority to promote literacy to local primary school students. The sample students in the secondary data used in this study were 250 eight-to-nine years old students. This study used the independent t-test and the ANOVA test to analyze the data. This study failed to find evidence that mentoring programs increased students' reading enjoyment and that males and females differed in their reading enjoyment after mentoring intervention. However, this study found evidence that mentoring periods significantly improved primary students' reading enjoyment.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Mentoring is a process whereby more experienced and knowledgeable persons support and encourage the less in a process of knowledge transfer to support the learning improvement [1], [2]. In education, mentoring involving adults has been used to support students' learning [3], [4]. It can offer positive relationships between adults and children [5], which can enhance students' confidence in learning [6], self-esteem, and academic skills [7]. In relation to reading, mentoring has been shown to be effective for children [8], [9]. It can enhance attention during reading lessons [7], improve reading fluency and reading comprehension [10], [11]. Furthermore, reading mentoring also has a positive influence on students' parents, as the program helps them understand the power of literacy and its importance for life [12].

There are various types of mentoring, such as one-to-one, small group or wide class mentoring. One-to-one mentoring is more effective than small group mentoring [13]. It offers greater opportunity for students to have individual attention and encourages them to become more engaged with the reading process. Moreover, the individualized feedback is important for reading strategies of young readers. The one-to-one

interaction offered by mentoring also offers chances for adults to be ready to respond to children's needs, supporting them to achieve an appropriate level of scaffolding [14]. As mentoring is beneficial in facilitating student learning, some programs have been developed to assist students not only in reading achievement, but also in reading attitude. This study aimed to assess the effectiveness of one-to-one mentoring to improve 8 to 9-year-old students' attitudes towards reading, particularly their enjoyment of reading.

Attitude is a tendency of feeling expressed with favor or disfavor toward something [15], suggesting that it relates to individual feeling. Feeling consists of affect, cognition and behavior [16]. The notion of affect refers to emotional factors that vary from pleasurable or unpleasurable feelings; cognition refers to thoughts or arguments, for example supportive or unsupportive arguments, while behavior refers to action or verbal statements that vary from favorable or supportive to unfavorable [16]. So, attitude is a stance of someone towards something that is represented by three factors: feelings, statements, and actions.

It could be proposed that attitudes towards reading; therefore, have three aspects: affective, cognitive and behavioral. The affective component consists of feelings about reading including enjoyment; the cognitive component comprises beliefs and opinions about reading, and the behavioral component relates to reading behavior. Attitudes toward reading in the educational field as two broad constructs: intrinsic and extrinsic factors [16]. Intrinsic factors consist of 'individual development and enjoyment' while extrinsic factors consist of the 'utilitarian factor' [17]. Despite these discrepancies in conceptualizing attitudes, it can be concluded that the construct of reading attitude consists of enjoyment of reading, expression, which covers opinions on reading, and its function for individuals, which Wu and Lu [17] defined as utilitarian factors and reading behavior. This concept is in line with the broad concept of attitude offered by Vogel and Wanke [18] which covers feelings, statements and behavior.

Attitudes toward reading are considered important as they may influence reading behavior and eventually affect levels of reading ability [19], [20]. Reading attitude is a system of feelings that can lead readers to avoid or approach reading activities [21]. Furthermore, feeling toward reading will drive learners to approach or avoid reading [22], [23] This means that attitude towards reading will affect students' actions in reading, and engagement in reading will influence reading ability [16]. However, a study by Lukhele [24], which used Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation, reported that no correlation was found between reading ability and reading attitudes, $r(84)=0.08$, $p=0.46$. Furthermore, Agustiani [25] found that students had positive reading attitudes, but this was not in line with their reading achievement. Martínez, Aricak, and Jewell [26] also claimed that high and low proficiency adolescent readers did not show statistical differences in reading attitude scores. Similarly, a study [27] reported that there were similar reading attitudes regardless of reading abilities, showing that students' reading attitude was not in line with reading achievement.

The variety of findings in terms of the relationships may be influenced by the varied ages of participants in each study. A study on the development of reading attitude [28] found that there was a progressive decline in reading attitude of higher grade students. Therefore, the findings of reading attitude cannot be generalized, as age may play a role in the degree of this. It could be proposed that the older the students are, the more they realize the variety of choices of entertainment, for example, television or games, so that reading may be less appealing than other entertainment alternatives. The second issue is that reading attitude is affected by various interacting variables; thus, there is a need for more in-depth research into attitude, with specific investigation of three concepts in understanding reading attitudes: feelings of the individual towards reading, beliefs about reading, and action or behavioral activities related to reading [29].

Therefore, to carry out an in-depth investigation reading attitude, the authors of this paper focused on one dimension of reading attitude: the enjoyment of reading, with a specified age of participants, namely eight to nine-year-old students. The focus was on reading enjoyment, as this factor supports students' engagement with reading and can improve reading ability; Gambrell [30] pointed out the importance of enjoyment towards reading, as it can motivate students to read, and greater motivation can lead to greater engagement. Moreover, Attiyat [31] carried out research on the impact of reading enjoyment contributed to students' academic success. Retelsdorf, Köller, and Möller [32] claimed that their longitudinal study showed that reading enjoyment was a significant predictor of students' reading comprehension.

Furthermore, this is confirmed by the study [33] which found that enjoyment of reading was essential, particularly in young people. This large-scale survey showed that children who enjoyed reading had better reading performance than those who did not. McGeown *et al.* [34] also claimed the significant correlation between reading enjoyment and word reading skill ($p<0.01$, $r=0.30$). By contrast, another researchers [35] argued that an increase in reading enjoyment was not necessarily followed by an indication of higher reading skills. However, it is important to raise students' positive liking or enjoyment of reading to help them become more engaged with reading activities [36]. Some studies have shown the positive impacts of mentoring on students' reading attitude. Results of study regarding the program effect on students showed that mentors felt that the students' reading enjoyment was clear, as they showed interest in selecting the books they wanted to read and perceived reading as a fun activity instead of an academic task [12]. Hudson [37] also noted that a positive relationship between mentor and mentee was offered during the

mentoring reading program. Trust, caring, and social interaction had an impact on positive responses to students' motivation for reading. Moreover, mentors who were energetic, communicative, used effective body language during the communication and related the reading content to students' prior knowledge or experience had more positive responses from students. Some examples were that students showed increased interest and enthusiasm in engaging in conversation for reading discussions.

An experimental study by Jung, Molfese, and Larson [10] had similar findings on the effectiveness of mentoring; the results of measurements of post-test reading attitude provided evidence that mentoring showed significantly positive effects on students liking towards reading. The researchers used triangulation to strengthen their findings by conducting interviews with mentors or tutors. The results were in line with the quantitative findings. Mentors reported that students' interest was much greater compared to their attitude when they began the program in the previous months.

By contrast, the findings of an experimental study [38] suggested that reading attitude was even lower after mentoring intervention. However, this study involved only a small number of participants and used pre and post-test research group without control group; a study researching two groups with and without intervention may allow to establish whether differences between the two indicate clear effects of the mentoring intervention. Therefore, the authors intended to analyze studies employing Randomized Control Trial involving control and intervention group. This study used secondary data of the Time to Read Program [39]. This is a mentoring program involving trained volunteers of local business community to help elementary school students across Northern Ireland develop their reading skills. There were 556 volunteers recruited in the Time to Read program. All volunteers in the program got literacy and relationship-building training [39]. The purpose of this study was to analyze the effect of mentoring on eight to nine-year-old students' reading enjoyment which consisted of three research questions: whether the mentoring program increased eight to nine-year-old students' enjoyment of reading, whether the mentoring program was having differential effect for males and females on the enjoyment of reading, and whether the duration of mentoring increased eight to nine-year-old students' enjoyment of reading.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study used existing secondary data of the randomized control trial study of the Time to Read Program. This was a volunteering project in Northern Ireland's local schools to improve literacy and promote reading enjoyment. The data set used by the authors was taken from a part of the Time to Read Program in the academic year 2018. The program consisted of two 30-minute mentoring sessions every week and ran during one school year. The volunteers were recruited from the local business community, and they were trained to deliver paired reading activities with children [40]. The scale used to measure students' enjoyment was the Garfield Elementary Reading Attitudes Scale with Cronbach's alpha value: 0.74–0.89 [40], [41]. The outcome measured for this trial was students' enjoyment in reading. There were 250 primary students (age 8 to 9 years old) and 24 schools took part in this study, 147 male (59%) and 103 female (41%). Table 1 shows the details of the sample by gender and group allocation. The secondary data were derived from a randomized control trial study in which the students were allocated randomly into two subgroups: control and intervention groups.

Table 1. Details of the sample by gender and group allocation

	Control group		Intervention group		Total	
	Number of Students	%	Number of students	%	Total students	%
Male	73	57%	74	60	147	59%
Female	54	43%	49	40	103	41%
Total	127	100%	123	100	250	100%

The following is the procedure of the research. The secondary data of the Time to Read Program, particularly the data of enjoyment of reading, were assessed online [39], [42]. The authors used linear regression analysis using SPSS version 23 to examine and summarize the relationship between two continuous variables [43]: mentoring and students' enjoyment in reading. The secondary data set of the Time to Read Program allocated the groups to two categories, using dummy variables "0" for the control group and "1" for the intervention group. The code was used to analyze the results of the trial study in both groups. To establish whether the mentoring program increased reading enjoyment in 8 to 9-year-old students, the authors conducted the following procedures.

First, the authors compared the mean post-test scores of students' enjoyment for intervention and control groups. This was done using an independent t-test. Then, the authors calculated the effect size of the intervention by controlling pre-test score to include pre-test of students' enjoyment as a second independent variable by using linear regression. Before doing linear regression analysis, the authors converted pre-test into standardized scores using SPSS, with a mean of 0 and standard deviation of 1. After the pre-test had been converted, the authors did linear regression analysis based on students who had pre and post-test by creating a filter variable to use which is coded "0" for missing data and "1" for full data.

Moreover, to establish whether the mentoring had different effects on the enjoyment of reading for 8 to 9-year-old males and female, the authors carried out the following procedure. A new variable, 'Intervention*male', the target variable labelled 'intvn_male' was created. This was followed by linear regression using ANOVA test with the post-test of enjoyment reading as the dependent variable, and z scores of reading enjoyment at pre-test, intervention, male, and intervention male as four independent variables. Finally, to analyze whether duration of mentoring increased eight to nine-year-old students' enjoyment of reading, a subgroup analysis was produced by filtering out the control group, as this group will not contribute to the model. Cases were filtered and selected, and linear regression analysis with ANOVA test was carried out after selection of the group intervention. In this way, the authors might be able to find out whether duration of mentoring affected student reading enjoyment in intervention group.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first research question of this study was to investigate whether the mentoring program increased eight to nine-year-old students' enjoyment of reading. Table 2 shows the mean score of students' enjoyment in the intervention group (M=2.83, SD=0.66) was slightly lower than for the control group (M=2.91, SD=0.63) and this difference was not statistically significant (p=0.35, t=0.94, df=232). Table 3 presents the summary of the mean scores between the control and intervention group in pre-and post-test.

Table 2. The summary of the effect of mentoring on students' reading enjoyment

Outcome	Intervention group		Control group		Effect size, Hedge's g (95% CI)**
	Mean (SD)	n	Mean (SD)	n	
Reading enjoyment	2.83 (0.66)	119	2.91 (0.62)	115	0.05 (-.087, .24)

*Adjusted post-test mean scores reported, controlling for differences between groups at pre-test

**With bias correction factor applied

Table 3. The summary of pre-test and post-test scores

Outcome	Control mean (SD)	Intervention mean (SD)
Pre-test	3.02 (0.5)	2.88 (0.59)
Post-test	2.91 (0.62)	2.83 (0.66)

For interpreting the output of linear regression, the coefficient and predicted mean score of the control and intervention group were calculated using (1):

$$\text{Predicted Post-test enjoyment} = a + b * \text{pre-test score} (+\text{error}) \quad (1)$$

a = constant value

b = gradient of the line

error = the vertical distance between the line and the actual position of each child

Control Group: Predicted post-test score = 2.891 + (-0.03) *(0) + 0.281 *(0) = 2.891

Intervention Group: Predicted post-test score = 2.891 + (-0.03) *(1) + 0.281 *(0) = 2.891 - 0.03 = 2.861

The calculation shows that students' enjoyment in reading decreased by 0.03 points. In terms of effect size, the formula used was as in (2):

$$\text{Effect size} = \text{Cohen' d} = \frac{M1 - M2}{SD * \text{pooled}} \quad (2)$$

Therefore, the following is the effect size associated with the intervention.

$$\text{Effect size} = \frac{2.891 - 2.861}{0.54} = 0.05$$

The results showed that the effect size associated with the intervention was 0.05, and standard deviation was 0.54. A small effect size of 0.05 did not correspond to the difference between mentoring and eight to nine-year-old students' reading enjoyment [41]. Overall, the result showed that this study did not find evidence that the mentoring program increased eight to nine-year-old students' enjoyment of reading.

Research question number 2 was related to whether the mentoring program having differential effect for males and females on the enjoyment of reading. The results showed that the interaction effect in the model was not statistically significant ($p=0.27$). Thus, there was no evidence to suggest that there was a difference in the effects of mentoring to male and female in relation to students' enjoyment.

The last research question in this study was to investigate whether the duration of mentoring sessions increases students' reading enjoyment. The result demonstrated that the coefficient representing the interaction effect between duration of mentoring session in minutes and reading enjoyment in this model was statistically significant ($p<0.05$). This indicated that there was evidence to suggest that the duration of mentoring had different effects on the reading enjoyment of 8 to 9-year-old students. Its relationship was shown with scatterplot as in Figure 1 and the summary of ANOVA was displayed Table 4.

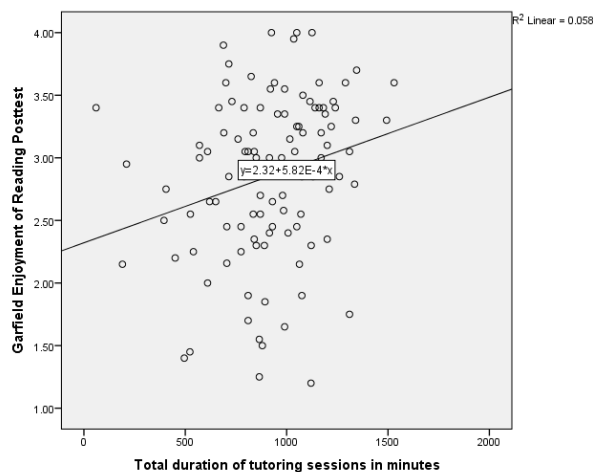


Figure 1. Relationship between duration of mentoring sessions and students' reading enjoyment

Table 4. Effects of duration of mentoring on students' reading enjoyment

	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	2	7.302	25.108	.000b
Residual	105	.291		
Total	107			

This trial has found that there was no evidence to suggest that mentoring is effective to increase reading enjoyment of students as their reading attitude get lower after intervention. This supported Dolman and Boyte-Hawryluk's study [38] in relation to the decrease of reading attitude. Nevertheless, this finding contradicted other studies [10], [12] which claimed that students showed more liking toward reading after getting intervention program. It is recommended to address social interaction factor in mentoring process to increase students' reading enjoyment. Woods *et al.* [43] found that positive social interactions, such as body language, gesture, care, engaging conversation and so on, play role to the success of enhancing students' positive reading attitude. Kozak and Recchia [44] supported that social interaction is important for reading development; in other words, that mentoring reading program did not work might be caused by social distance. Besides, trained mentors may affect development of students' reading attitude [45].

The ability to answer students' questions and deliver appropriate scaffolding in reading in which these can be achieved through training can help students get individualized supports which enhance their reading enjoyment [46]. Lastly, it is recommended that mentors offer mentees to select their topic or reading

materials; in this way, the mentors might develop students' reading enjoyment as they are pleased with their choices in line with their interests [10]. Students' personal choice in reading materials is associated with intrinsic motivation in reading behavior [7].

Concerning gender, the study did not find evidence to show a difference by gender in reading enjoyment. This finding might imply that mentoring programs may facilitate students' equal access to reading enjoyment. Contrary to this research finding, Jung, Molfese, and Larson [10] found that the effect of the mentoring intervention was related to mentees' gender; male developed a positive attitude after the intervention while female decreased [10]. There is a need for further research to clarify these contradictory findings so that educational practitioners can ensure to provide specific strategies to accommodate a particular group that has low enjoyment in reading during intervention mentoring program.

Furthermore, this study reported evidence showing that the duration of mentoring positively affects students reading enjoyment. It is consistent with previous study [47], indicating that a more extended mentoring period may relate to a better positive attitude toward self-worth and learning. The more extended mentoring period is, the better students' enjoyment level might be. This is because school children might get knowledge transfer from adults in their reading activities while having help in the mentoring program. The support might enhance students' attention, comprehension, and confidence in reading [7]; in this way, students might not find reading activities boring, but enjoyable as they have got help from adults to understand the reading content. Besides, the relationship between mentor and mentee may develop during the mentoring program. The longer duration of mentoring may create a more positive relationship between them as they have developed their trust and caring. In other words, an extended period of mentoring may give more time for students to have a better social adjustment to mentors. Therefore, when they have enough time to build their relationship, students may feel that reading activities are enjoyable. Previous researchers [7], [37] claimed that students showed increased enthusiasm and interest in reading after several meetings. The positive relationship that occurred during the program impacted students' motivation to read [37].

4. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to probe the effect of mentoring programs on students' reading enjoyment. The first research question was whether the mentoring program for eight to nine-year-old students increased their reading enjoyment. The second was whether the mentoring program had a differential effect among male and female students on the joy of reading. The last was whether the duration of mentoring affected students' enjoyment of reading. The findings revealed that this study failed to find evidence that mentoring programs increased eight to nine-year-old students' reading enjoyment and show evidence concerning the difference between male and females in their reading enjoyment after mentoring intervention. However, this study demonstrated that periods of mentoring programs significantly increased students' reading enjoyment.

This study did not reveal why mentoring did not improve students' reading enjoyment. Also, this study did not explore male and female students' perceptions of the effect of mentoring programs on their reading enjoyment. Such detailed information can be accommodated with qualitative research. Thus, the authors recommended that future researchers conduct interviews with students to gather more detailed information about the perceived effect of mentoring program on their reading enjoyment. The interview data might contribute to how educational practitioners can modify the mentoring programs and improve the quality of the programs, adjusting students' interests and needs, which might increase reading enjoyment.

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