

The Impact of Parental Influence on the Reading Habits of Gen-Y adults: A Generalized Linear Model Analysis

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Abstract

This study explores the impact of parental influence on reading habits of Gen Y adults. A total of 206 respondents comprising of business students from a private higher education institution in Malaysia participated in this survey. Factor analysis reveals the presence of five categories of readers based on their reading attitudes and three categories of parental influences. Female respondents enjoy reading and they read to gain knowledge. However, the male respondents disliked reading and were not interested in acquiring knowledge. Children of concerned and positive parents enjoyed reading as opposed to children of high-expectation parents who did not like reading even though they are good in the English language. The impact of parent's education level, when tested individually, on the reading habits, was found significant for the disadvantaged readers. An interaction effect of the combined parents' education level was found to play a major role on the knowledge purpose readers. A further study on the interaction effect reveals that it is the working mothers (with a degree/masters education) who play significant roles in developing the reading habits of their children as far as acquiring knowledge is concerned.

Keywords: Gen-Y; Reading Habits; Parental Influence; Type of readers.

INTRODUCTION

Reading is a priceless activity, but despite its importance, the interest in reading is diminishing among the Gen-Y adults. One of the major causes for this is the influence of technology. A study done by Rennie and Patterson (2008) found that there was a shift in reading mode from physical text to virtual text, as students adopted click and scan reading practices. Students spent more time per day using the Internet and enjoying it, rather than recreational reading, reading for academic purposes or watching television (Mokhtari, Richard and Gardner (2009)).

Several studies have been undertaken on various issues related to reading and these include the reading habits, interests and attitudes of students. The literature on reading include studies done by Rennie and Patterson (2008), Manuel and Robinson (2003), Nathanson, Pruslow and Levitt (2008), Su-Yen Chen (2007), Mokhtari et al. (2009), Gallik (1999) and Ogunrombi and Adio (1995). Manuel and Robinson (2003) reviewed some assumptions about gender and adolescents' reading practices while Su-Yen Chen (2007) did a study on the extracurricular reading habits of college students in Taiwan and discovered that the males spent a greater average amount of time on extracurricular reading compared to the females even though there was a greater variance found among males. The study also found the existence of a negative significant correlation between high school grades and the amount of time spent on

extracurricular reading. Nathanson et al. (2008) found that there was a lack of passion in reading among in-service and prospective teachers and this may have a negative impact on the literacy of future generations.

Pereira, Canavarro, Cardoso and Mendonc (2009) examined the effects of parental rearing styles on child behaviour problems among Portuguese school-aged children. They found four types of parental rearing styles: low support, supportive-controller, rejecting-controller and supportive. Their study found that respondents whose parents were supportive-controller and supportive types had lower levels of behavioural problems as compared to low support and rejecting-controller parents. Another study done by Aunola, Stattin and Nurmi (2000) found that children's reading development improved when their parents had positive beliefs in their school performance.

The influence of parents on adolescents reading habits has long been recognized as important. Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts and Fraleigh (1987) studied the different parenting styles and discovered the impact of these differing styles on the grades of the respondents under study. A study by O'Rourke (1979) found that the reading habits of children were not influenced by their parent's reading habits. Aunola et al. (2002), on the other hand, studied and concluded that a parent's positive belief improved the child's reading development. Mei Tang (2002) examined the relationship between parental influence and their children's career choices. She found that for Asian American and Chinese respondents, parental influence (especially that of the fathers) on career choices was significant. Nathanson et al. (2008) found that parents played an important role in creating the enthusiastic readers. Cairney and Munsie (1995) involved parents' participation in literacy activity of their children in the 'Talk to a Literacy Learner (TTALL)' program. They found that parents' involvement not only enhanced the children's learning process but it also made them more confident learners. The children read and wrote more often and selected more difficult and wider range of materials to read.

Since reading plays a significant role in knowledge building and intellectual growth, the present study offers further empirical evidence identifying possible dependent sources of reading habits. It is hoped that the research on the impact of parental influence on reading habits would bring to light, different interpretations of a common term. Specifically, the research questions address a range of approaches to reading habits:

1. Why do students read and how much time per week is devoted to reading?
2. What are the various reading attitudes of the Gen Y adults?
3. What is the impact of gender on reading attitudes?
4. What are the different types of parental influence?
5. Does parental influence affect reading habits of Gen-Y?
6. Does parental education have an impact on Gen-Y reading habits?

METHOD

The study examines the effect of parental influence on the reading habits of Gen-Y adults. A structured questionnaire was used to elicit pertinent information with regards to parental influence and the reading habits of Gen Y adults. The first section of the questionnaire obtained the respondents' basic demographic information. These include gender, age, education, ethnicity and their parent's education level. The second section of the questionnaire was developed based on previous literature on the constructs of reading habits. Prior to data analysis, this section contained 23 statements on a 5-point Likert scale that attempted to elicit information on the respondents' reading habits, but only 16 items were selected in the final stage. Information with regards to parental influence made up the final section of the questionnaire which originally contained 26 items on a 5-point Likert scale but only 12 items remained after conducting factor analysis. Before conducting the main survey, a pilot test involving 79 respondents was performed and the questionnaire was further refined.

A total of 206 respondents were selected using simple random sampling. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data collected. The results were summarized using descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution, mean scores and standard deviations. The utilization of factor analysis, cluster analysis and multivariate general linear model also provided useful insights into the various dimensions or constructs of parental influence and the reading habits of the respondents. The other statistical analysis tools employed included reliability test and crosstab.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The reading habits of students can be explained by many factors. Studies done by Dornbusch et al. (1987), Aunola et al. (2002), Mei Tang (2002), Cairney and Munsie (1995) and Nathanson et al. (2008) have shown that parents play important roles in developing students' reading habits. This in turn would have a significant impact on the students' academic studies and their career choices in future.

Respondents' demographics

The respondents' demographics are depicted in Table 1. There were a total of 206 respondents of which 45.6% were males and 54.4% were females. It was found that majority of the respondents' mothers had only high school education (50.7%) and only 26.6 % of them had degree/masters. As for the fathers, 37% of them had degree/masters followed by high school education (32.5%).

Less than half (45.1%) of the respondents spent 1 to 3 hours reading per week and only 12.7% read more than 6 hours. It was quite troubling to find out that 24.5% of the Gen-Y in this survey read less than one hour per week.

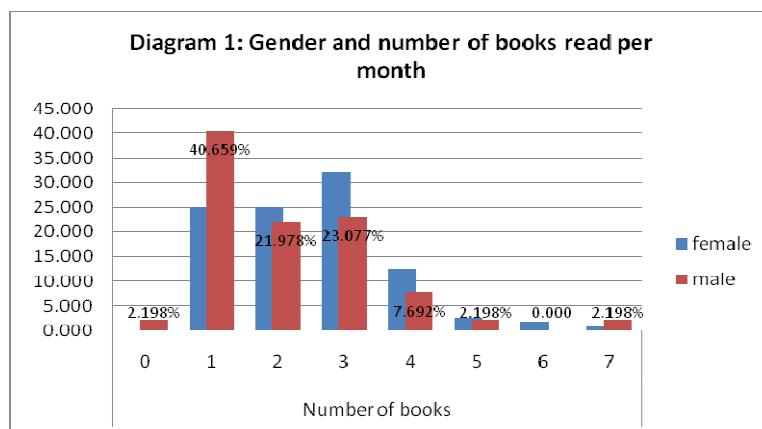
Majority of the respondents (31.6%) read one book per month, out of which 40.66% are males, as shown in Diagram 1. 32.1% of the females in the survey, read three books per month. The percentage of respondents that read two or more books was 67.4%. This is not consistent with the study done by Nathanson et al. (2008) where less than 50% of the respondents read two

or more books and about 25% read one book during summer. Another study by Wicks (1995) found that boys read two books per month on the average and older students either read more or less number of books.

Table 1: Sample demographics

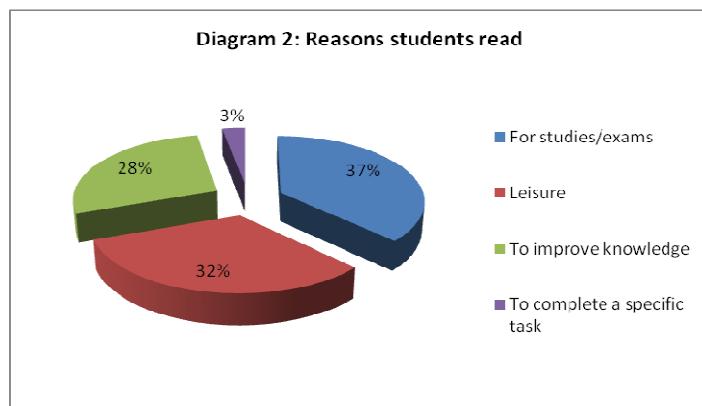
Measure	Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	94	45.6
	Female	112	54.4
Father's education level	SPM/MCE/O-levels	65	32.5
	STPM/HSC/A-Levels	22	11
	Degree/Masters	74	37
	Others	35	17.5
Mother's education level	SPM/MCE/O-levels	103	50.7
	STPM/HSC/A-Levels	20	9.9
	Degree/Masters	54	26.6
	Others	22	10.8
Number of hours spent reading per week	Less than 1 hour	50	24.5
	1-3 hours	92	45.1
	4-6 hours	36	17.6
	more than 6 hours	26	12.7
Number of books read per month	0	2	1
	1	65	31.6
	2	48	23.3
	3	57	27.7
	4	21	10.2
	5	5	2.4
	6	2	1
	7	3	1.5

As for the types of materials read by the respondents, it was found that 23.1% of them read newspaper most often followed by online websites or webzines. Nor Shahriza (2007) who studied the reading habits of the undergraduates in a university in Malaysia, found that majority of the respondents read newspapers a few times a week, followed by academic books and websites. Wicks (1995) discovered that newspapers were read most frequently, followed by fiction books.



Why do students read and how much time per week is devoted to reading?

Diagram 2 shows the reasons why students read and it was noted that a majority (32.04%) of the respondents read for their studies or exams only and not for leisure or to get knowledge. This is consistent with the study done by Nor Shahriza (2007) who found that Malaysian students only read for academic purposes and not for general knowledge and pleasure. The fact that the Gen-Y adults are not too keen on reading is rather worrying as this may lead to a future generation of workers and leaders who are not well-versed with general knowledge and facts which could be detrimental to the development and sustainability of the country.



A majority of the respondents (45.1%) spent 1 to 3 hours reading per week and read at least one book per month, as shown in Table 1. It was found that among the respondents who read between 1-3 hours, 45.54% were females and 44.57% were males as shown in Table 2, implying that there is hardly any difference in the amount of time spent on reading between the males and females in this study.

Table 2: Crosstab between gender and number of hours spent on reading a week.

		Hours spent reading a week.			
		less than 1 hour	1-3 hours	4-6 hours	more than 6 hours
Gender	female	Count	23	51	25
		% within Gender	20.536	45.536	22.321
	male	Count	27	41	11
		% within Gender	29.348	44.565	11.957
Total		Count	50	92	36
		% within Gender	24.510	45.098	17.647
					12.745

What are the various reading habits of the Gen Y adults?

The respondents' reading habits were measured by 16 items which remained after factor analysis was conducted. Based on Cohen's criteria (1989), two variables are said to be associated if the correlation coefficient value is at least 0.35. In this study, all the variables in a construct are

adequately correlated since the highest absolute correlation falls between 0.35 and 0.85. Therefore, every item in the construct correlates adequately with at least one other item in the construct.

The reliability analysis gave a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.790 for reading habits, which is well above the minimum requirement of 0.7. The KMO value from the factor analysis was 0.787, indicating a good level of data reduction adequacy. Table 3 shows the pattern matrix of the reading habits measured by these 16 items.

Five factors were identified from the factor analysis which accounted for 68.149% of the total variation in the 16 items in the construct. The minimum factor loading in the pattern matrix table is 0.589. The composite reliability score for each construct is between 0.768 and 0.911. The factor scores were then saved and were named as Reluctant readers, Exam-purpose readers, Disadvantaged readers, Knowledge-purpose readers and Indifferent readers.

Table 3: Pattern matrix for items measuring Reading Habits

	Component				
	Reluctant readers	Exam purpose readers	Disadvantaged readers	Knowledge purpose readers	Indifferent readers
I basically don't read much at all (C4)	0.826				
I don't like reading books with many words but not much pictures in it (C12)	0.801				
I don't care much for reading (C5)	0.774				
I don't like reading (C9)	0.71				
I prefer computer games or face book rather than reading during my leisure time (C17)	0.7				
Reading makes me sleepy (C11)	0.681				
I don't like reading for leisure (C8)	0.589				
I only read materials that are required in my studies (C7)		0.84			
I only read what I'm supposed to for my studies (C3)		0.78			
I will only go to the bookshop/library if I need to get a particular reading material. (C23)		0.713			
I find it difficult to understand materials written in the English Language because I have a poor command of the English Language (C18)			0.917		
It takes me a very long time to read materials written in the English Language because I need to use a dictionary to translate the words I don't understand (C19)			0.912		
Reading enhances my knowledge and skill (C16)				0.87	
I perform better in my studies with the new knowledge acquired through reading (C10)				0.823	
I read just for the fun of it (C13)					0.814
I only read when I'm bored and have nothing else to do (C15)					0.765
Composite reliability (CR)	0.888	0.822	0.911	0.835	0.768

Cluster Analysis was used to further investigate the deeper clusters or groups that existed within the five dimensions of respondents based on their reading attitudes. The 2-Cluster

Analysis was used to investigate the 2 broad categories of readers, that is, the Resistant Readers and Natural Readers as shown in Table 4.

The Resistant readers disliked reading and but will read for exam purposes and have poor command of the English Language. They do not read for acquiring knowledge. The Natural readers on the other hand, enjoy reading. They are proficient in the English language and read for leisure, exam purposes and to gain knowledge.

Resistant readers make up 60.1% of the total respondents whereas only 39.9% were Natural readers. Therefore, new and innovative methods must be found to cultivate the reading culture among Gen-Y of today who will eventually become the future leaders.

Table 4: Two cluster solution for reading habits

	Cluster	
	Resistant Readers	Natural Readers
Reluctant readers	0.55722	-0.83936
Exam-purpose readers	0.43482	-0.65499
Disadvantaged readers	0.26548	-0.3999
Knowledge-purpose readers	-0.42927	0.64663
Indifferent readers	0.14525	-0.21879
Total	119	79

What is the impact of gender on reading attitudes?

Gender was found to be significant for only three types of readers (at 5% significant level) i.e. the reluctant readers, the knowledge-purpose readers and the indifferent readers as shown in Table 5.

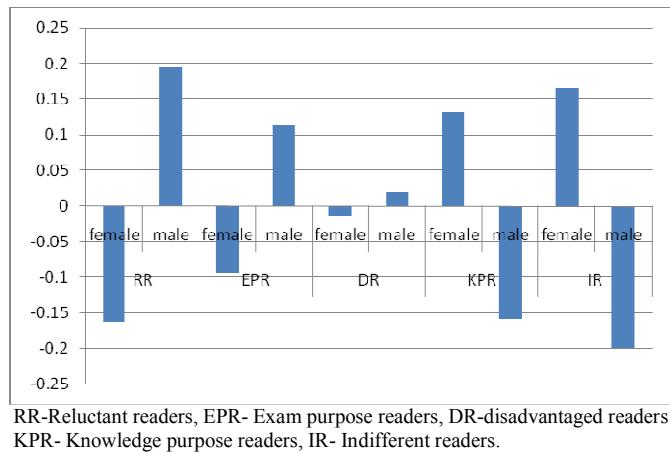
Table 5: Analysis of t-test

	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	p-value
Reluctant readers	female	-0.163	0.978	2.553	0.011
	male	0.196	0.996		
Exam purpose readers	female	-0.094	1.054	1.455	0.147
	male	0.113	0.925		
Disadvantaged readers	female	-0.015	0.98	0.232	0.817
	male	0.018	1.029		
Knowledge purpose readers	female	0.132	0.893	2.058	0.041
	male	-0.159	1.099		
Indifferent readers	female	0.166	0.939	2.590	0.01
	male	-0.199	1.039		

Female respondents enjoying reading and they read to gain knowledge. However, the male respondents disliked reading and were not interested in acquiring knowledge.

The absolute mean of the males were higher than the females for all these three types of readers mentioned above. The results indicated that more males were reluctant readers as they disliked reading. Females read for knowledge as compared to the males in this study. Overall, the males are not keen on reading.

Diagram 3: The independent t-test –mean of gender



What are the different types of parental influence?

Parental influence was measured by 12 items. In this study, every item in the construct correlates adequately with at least one other item in the construct.

The reliability analysis gave a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.842 which is well above the minimum requirement of 0.7. The KMO value from factor analysis was 0.823 indicating a good level of data reduction adequacy. Table 6 provides the pattern matrix for each item measuring the parental influence.

Factor analysis categorized the parental influence into three factors which explained 63.938% of the total variation in the 12 items in the construct. The minimum factor loading is 0.527. The composite reliability score for each construct is between 0.82 and 0.885. The factor scores were then saved as Positive parents, High expectation parents and Concerned parents with the hope of using for further analysis.

Table 6: Pattern matrix for items measuring Parental Influence

	Component		
	Positive parents	High-expectation parents	Concerned parents
When we discuss things, my parents consider my point of view. (F21)	0.934		
My parents trust my judgment. (F24)	0.85		
My parents ask my opinion when my family is discussing some issues. (F16)	0.78		
My parents are able to sense when I'm upset about something. (F19)	0.7		
My parents help me to understand myself better. (F23)	0.655		
I like to get my parents point of view on things I'm concerned about. (F20)	0.537		
My parents keep pushing me to do my best in whatever I do. (F2)		0.901	
My parents keep pushing me to think independently. (F3)		0.872	
My parents have set very high standards for me. (F11)		0.758	
My parents know where I go at night. (F9)			0.967
My parents know who my friends are. (F8)			0.798
When I get a good grade in college, my parents praise me. (F7)			0.527
Composite reliability (CR)	0.885	0.882	0.82

Does parental influence affects reading habits of Gen-Y?

The regression results, as indicated in Table 7, indicated that concerned parents are negatively associated with, and statistically significant in explaining the non-readers and exam-purpose readers but was positively associated to the knowledge-purpose readers at 10% significant level. Children of concerned parents are more likely to be readers, who read not only for exams but also to acquire knowledge. Therefore, this indicates that there exist an association between concerned parents and non-readers, exam-purpose readers and knowledge purpose readers.

The high-expectation parents are negatively related to the disadvantaged readers at 5% significant level. It shows that children of high expectation parents are proficient in English language but are not interested in reading. Thus, there is an association between high-expectation parents and disadvantaged readers.

In addition, the positive parents are negatively associated with, and significant in explaining the indifferent readers. This implicates that if the respondent have parents who are positive, he enjoys reading. This is consistent with the study done by Gonzalez, Willems and Holbein (2005) who found the existence of a relationship between parental involvement and students' motivation. When parents are involved in their children's learning process, the child is more motivated to read and shows more accountability in their learning. A study done by Nathanson et al. (2008) also indicated the importance of parental involvement in creating enthusiastic readers.

The empirical results above indicated that the types of parental influence were important predictors to the Gen-Y type of readers.

Table 7: Parameter Estimates with reading habits as the dependent variable

Dependent Variable	Parameter	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Reluctant readers	Intercept	-.020	.073	-.277	.782	-.164	.124
	Positive parents	-.102	.083	-1.225	.222	-.266	.062
	High-expectation parents	.096	.078	1.224	.223	-.059	.250
	Concerned parents	-.164	.082	-1.997	.047**	-.326	-.002
Exam-purpose readers	Intercept	-.005	.073	-.068	.946	-.149	.139
	Positive parents	.053	.083	.640	.523	-.111	.218
	High-expectation parents	.096	.078	1.223	.223	-.059	.250
	Concerned parents	-.144	.082	-1.747	.082***	-.306	.019
Disadvantaged readers	Intercept	-.023	.071	-.317	.752	-.163	.118
	Positive parents	.054	.081	.661	.509	-.106	.213
	High-expectation parents	-.168	.076	-2.209	.028**	-.318	-.018
	Concerned parents	-.073	.080	-.909	.364	-.230	.085
Knowledge-purpose readers	Intercept	.016	.071	.222	.824	-.125	.157
	Positive parents	.122	.081	1.496	.136	-.039	.283
	High-expectation parents	.059	.077	.768	.443	-.092	.210
	Concerned parents	.157	.080	1.956	.052***	-.001	.316
Indifferent readers	Intercept	.008	.074	.110	.913	-.137	.153
	Positive parents	-.146	.084	-1.742	.083***	-.312	.019
	High-expectation parents	.030	.079	.379	.705	-.126	.186
	Concerned parents	.092	.083	1.113	.267	-.071	.256

Statistically significant at 5% and * Statistically significant at 10%

Is there a link between parental education and Gen-Y reading habits?

The GLM multivariate test was done to examine whether parental education has an effect on the Gen-Y reading habits. Bornstein and Zlotnik (2007) found that parental education level affect the parenting style. ‘Families with higher levels of parental education tend to be more authoritative and lower in authoritarian and permissive parenting.’ Therefore, directly or indirectly, the parenting style may have an impact on reading habits of a child. Another study by Folorunso (2010) found that parental education was one of the factors that influence the academic performance of the respondents under study.

Table 8: GLM Analysis

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects						
Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Father's education level	Reluctant readers	1.734	3	0.578	0.578	0.63
	Exam purpose readers	0.805	3	0.268	0.262	0.853
	Disadvantaged readers	7.254	3	2.418	2.834	0.04**
	Knowledge purpose readers	5.213	3	1.738	1.77	0.155
	Indifferent readers	0.264	3	0.088	0.084	0.969
Mother's education level	Reluctant readers	0.297	3	0.099	0.099	0.96
	Exam purpose readers	0.108	3	0.036	0.035	0.991
	Disadvantaged readers	9.101	3	3.034	3.556	0.016**
	Knowledge purpose readers	3.376	3	1.125	1.146	0.332
	Indifferent readers	1.783	3	0.594	0.569	0.636
Fatheredulev * Motheredulev	Reluctant readers	4.735	8	0.592	0.592	0.784
	Exam purpose readers	3.498	8	0.437	0.426	0.904
	Disadvantaged readers	8.945	8	1.118	1.311	0.241
	Knowledge purpose readers	15.320	8	1.915	1.95	0.055***
	Indifferent readers	6.786	8	0.848	0.812	0.593

**Statistically significant at 5%

*** Statistically significant at 10%

Parent's educational level, when tested individually (as shown in Table 8), was found to be significant only for the disadvantaged readers. An interaction effect of the combined parents' education level was found to play a major role on the knowledge purpose readers. The findings show that the parents' education level plays an important role in determining the disadvantaged readers.

Tukey's test was used to further investigate the effect of the parent's education level, when tested individually, on the disadvantaged readers, as shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Tukey's test on disadvantaged readers

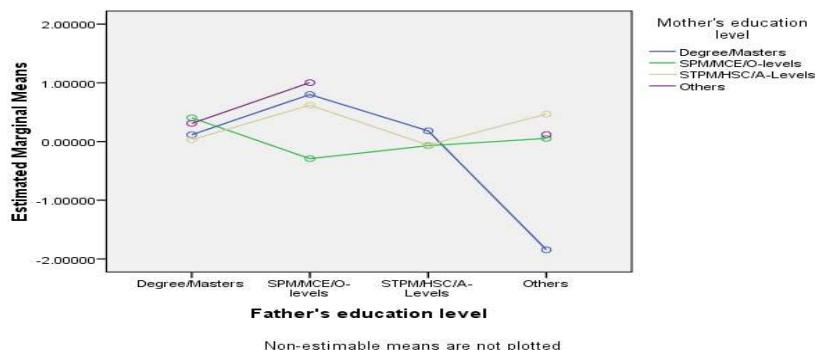
Father's education level	N	Subset			Mother's education level	N	Subset	
		1	2	3			1.000	2.000
Degree/Masters	70	-0.365			STPM/HSC/A-Levels	19	-0.402	
STPM/HSC/A-Levels	21	-0.198	-0.198		Degree/Masters	48	-0.296	
SPM/MCE/O-levels	64		0.248	0.248	SPM/MCE/O-levels	100	0.153	0.153
Others	33			0.613	Others	21		0.618
Sig.		0.867	0.168	0.331	Sig.		0.095	0.209

It was found that parents who had degree/masters will have a different impact on the disadvantaged readers as compared to parents with only SPM (high school) education. The

respondents will not be disadvantaged readers if their parents have a degree/masters or SPM/HSC/A-levels, in other words, they will be proficient in English Language. However, if the parents' education is SPM/MCE/O-Levels or others, their children will be disadvantaged readers and therefore will face problems with the English language.

From Table 8, it was shown that the interaction effect of the combined parents' education level plays an important role in determining the knowledge purpose readers. Therefore the estimated marginal means were used to find which exact level of the parents' education affected this type of reader. As shown in Diagram 4, if the father's education is others (not degree/masters, SPM or STPM) and the mother has degree/masters, the respondent read for acquiring knowledge. This may indicate the importance of the mother's education level in determining the knowledge purpose readers.

Diagram 4: Estimated marginal mean for knowledge purpose readers



A further analysis using Crosstab (Table 10) was done to investigate whether the mothers of the knowledge purpose readers were working mothers. The crosstab showed that if the father's level of education is others, there were three mothers with degree/masters and all were working mothers. This indicates that it is the working mothers (with a degree/masters education) who play significant roles in developing the reading habits of their children as far as acquiring knowledge is concerned.

Table 10: Crosstab between the parent's education level and if the mother is working.

Father's education level	Mother's education level	Is your mother working?	
		Yes	No
Others	Degree/Masters	3	0
	SPM/MCE/O-levels	6	9
	STPM/HSC/A-Levels	1	1
	Others	5	10
	Total	15	20

CONCLUSION

The study does have some limitations, especially with respect to the sample size which is quite restricted. The questionnaire developed for this study has room for further improvement. Despite this, the preliminary and actual findings certainly provide an insight into the students' reading attitudes and the impact of parental influence on the reading habits of Gen Y adults. The findings show that a majority of the Gen-Y adults read between 1-3 hours per week and they mainly read the newspapers or online websites. They basically read one book per month and read for exam purpose only.

The factor analysis revealed five categories of readers based on their reading attitudes and three categories of parental influences. The five types of readers were then classified into two different categories: resistant readers and natural readers, using the Cluster analysis. Resistant readers, who were the majority, disliked reading and but will read for exam purposes. They do not read for acquiring knowledge and have poor command of the English Language. The Natural readers enjoy reading. They are proficient in the English language and read for leisure, exam purposes and to gain knowledge.

Female respondents were found to be readers and they read to gain knowledge. However, the male respondents disliked reading and were not interested in acquiring knowledge.

It was also discovered that children of concerned and positive parents enjoyed reading as opposed to children of high-expectation parents who did not like reading even though they are good in the English language.

Last but not least, parents' education level was found to be significant for the disadvantaged readers. Parents with higher education (degree/masters and SPM/HSC/A-levels) have children who are proficient in the English language as compared to parents with high school education (SPM/O-levels and others). The interaction effect on parents' education level revealed that working mothers (with a degree/masters education) play a significant role in developing the reading habits of their children as far as acquiring knowledge is concerned.

This study was conducted in a very thorough manner whereby we categorized the reading attitudes of the students into five constructs and linked it to different types of parental influences. Although many studies have been conducted in this area, however, to the authors' knowledge, none of the studies have looked into the interaction effect of parental education level on the type of readers. These findings will be of value to educators and parents as they seek a better understanding of the needs and priorities of these young adults. It is hoped that these findings will establish a better understanding of the Gen-Y reading attitudes and help in the development of healthy reading habits.

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