

READING FOR PLEASURE: EXPLORING FEMALE STUDENTS' MOTIVATION IN READING STORIES

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Abstract

Every student has different motivations for reading, specifically male and female students. This study aimed to explore female students' motivation especially in reading stories. The participants of this study were female students from grades 10th-12th at an Islamic senior high school in Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia. This study used quantitative method in the form of survey research design. The data were collected using MRQ (Motivation for Reading Questionnaire) which contains 8 indicators regarding reading motivation: reading for curiosity, reading for involvement, reading for challenge, reading for recognition, reading for grades, reading for social reading for competition, and reading for compliance. It has 40 items developed from these 8 indicators which was printed out to be shared with the students. The data collected were statistically analysed by Statistical Package for The Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings of this study reveal that female students of an Islamic senior high school in Semarang were extrinsically motivated to read stories. This is a note that students still need more engagement from the teacher in reading to finally read because of their own will.

Keywords: female students, reading for pleasure, reading motivation, story reading

1. INTRODUCTION

Every page of the book leads the reader to new perspectives of the world. According to Sua (2021), not only knowledge about language, especially in grammar and vocabulary, individuals can get a basic understanding of the world that can be applied in real-life situations through reading. Because of reading, individuals can see the world from many perspectives so it improves their critical thinking skills. Moreover, in the language educational field, it is undeniable that reading is one of the skills that need to be mastered. Qian (2023) states that reading contributes to the improvement of students' language skills because of the new vocabulary and knowledge that can help their understanding of the target language. In light of these arguments, it can be concluded that reading is not only beneficial for individuals' education but also their personal life development as a long-life learning.

Some approaches are used by teachers to give students exposure to reading English texts. Reading for pleasure is one of the methods that can foster students' reading interest because students have the freedom to choose what they want to read which leads them to be aware that reading is important to them when they finally find enjoyment in reading (Ulivia et al., 2023). Extensive reading is one of the most enjoyable reading because readers can choose any different sources and genres based on their preferences. Azizi et al. (2020) state that extensive reading is one of the methods in language teaching to foster students' love of reading because students do not purposely read for their language study but for their enjoyment. There are many reading materials for extensive reading, five of them are articles, essays, technical reports, stories, and books (Lindawati, 2022). Stories have become one of the most favorite sources to be read by students. Isenberg et al. (2019) define a story as a sequence of real or fictional events that are causally connected. A story tells the readers why something happens. It is more interesting when it is related to the readers' personal lives. Stories can engage more students to read because it is easier for them to understand the content. They can also choose one that fits into their preferences, ages, and levels. According to Sua (2021), stories can improve students' motivation to read for pleasure. It supports the idea that students must have reading motivation or the love and willingness to read to foster their reading skills (Septiani and Susanto, 2019). In conclusion, stories stand out as some of the most effective reading materials for students because they offer a wide range of genres to choose from. This variety not only caters to different interests and preferences but also plays a significant role in encouraging and sustaining students' motivation to read.

Good readers need reading motivation to get benefit and enjoyment from what they read. Reading motivation is a crucial aspect that encourages students to read more and comprehend the reading materials (Maneba et al., 2021). In reading, readers should have engagement, a clear purpose, and specific needs to reach their goals. Self-determination claims that everyone has three basic needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When the three of them synergize, everyone is likely to be more motivated. There are two types of motivation, they are intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is when individuals do something because they enjoy it. Extrinsic motivation is when individuals do something because they want to get rewards or avoid punishment (Ryan and Deci, 2017). Generally, students need to be intrinsically motivated to reach the statement that they love to read sincerely.

Regarding reading motivation, or learning motivation in general, females often demonstrate higher levels of motivation compared to their male peers. Abdullah and Yunus (2019) through the RMP Questionnaire, found that female primary school students in Johor Bahru, Malaysia have higher reading motivation to read English stories than male students. Furthermore, Murtafi'ah and Putro (2020) who adapted MRQ as the instrument, confirmed that female Islamic boarding school students were more motivated to read and had more positive attitudes toward reading than male students. Likewise, Hek and Kraaykamp (2023) found that secondary school female students in the Netherlands had higher intrinsic reading motivation. Aside from the gender comparison-based reading motivation study, Septiani and Susanto (2019) tried to be more focused on female students, specifically on their motivation to comprehend narrative text. Using an MRQ questionnaire to gather the data, they explored that female vocational high school students in Palangka Raya students had high motivation in reading comprehension of a narrative text. It is important to note that the research above may vary in the research method, instrument, population, and sample size. On the other hand, this study gave more variation in the population because this study was conducted at an Islamic senior high school in Semarang. This study aimed to contribute to the existing study about reading motivation by filling the gap in the research regarding female students' motivation in reading stories.

2. METHODS

Research design

This study employed a descriptive quantitative research method, utilizing a survey research design. The descriptive quantitative research method affords a numeric description of trends, opinions, or attitudes of a population by examining the sample of that population (Creswell, 2014). This method was chosen to collect numerical data from participants, allowing for the description and analysis of their opinions. The survey research design enabled the researcher to gather data from the targeted sample of female students, providing an overview of their motivation and behaviors in reading stories. This method allowed the researchers to quantify key aspects of motivation, providing clear insight into how female students are motivated to read stories.

Research site and participants

The research was conducted in an Islamic senior high school in Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia. The researchers selected this school due to its unique structure, which separates female and male students. This separation provided an ideal environment for studying female students exclusively, aligning with the specific focus of the research on female students' reading motivation. Besides, the school's arrangement minimized external variables related to gender interaction that could influence the findings of the study, hence it ensures more reliable and valid data. Since the population of the students was relatively small, the researchers decided to include all female students as research participants. The total of participants in this study were 40 students from 10th-12th grade.

Data collection and analysis

The instrument that was used in this study was printed-out reading motivation questionnaire sheets. This study used MRQ (Motivation for Reading Questionnaire) which was developed by (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). The questionnaire was adjusted to the topic of this study which has 8 indicators: reading curiosity, reading involvement, reading for challenge, reading for recognition, reading for grades, reading for social, reading for competition, and reading for compliance. It has 40 statements developed from those 8 elements. This questionnaire was translated into Bahasa Indonesia, so it is easier for the students to comprehend the questionnaire. Students responded to each statement by using a Likert scale of agreement ranging from 1-4: strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), agree (3), and strongly agree (4). Before delivering the questionnaire, it was validated through expert judgement while the reliability was measured using Cronbach's Alpha analysis on SPSS. A Cronbach's Alpha of 0.7 or more is considered good, showing that the test or survey items work well together and are reliable for most uses (Barbera et al., 2021). The reliability analysis result of this study's instrument is 0.916 which is considered reliable. The data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for The Social Sciences (SPSS) focusing on investigating participants' responses to Likert scale units related to their reading motivation through the MRQ questionnaire.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION***Findings***

After delivering the questionnaire sheets which contain 40 statements to 40 students, the researchers analyzed the data of the research using descriptive statistics analysis on SPSS. Here is the result that the researchers got:

Table 1. Descriptive Statistic Analysis Result

	N	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	SD
Reading for curiosity	40	6	12	354	8.85	1.791
Reading for involvement	40	6	15	422	10.55	2.037
Reading for challenge	40	10	22	670	16.75	3.144
Reading for recognition	40	7	16	489	12.23	2.247
Reading for grades	40	9	19	545	13.63	2.204
Reading for social	40	6	23	649	16.22	3.598
Reading for competition	40	10	21	617	15.43	2.669
Reading for compliance	40	12	24	676	16.90	2.907
Valid N (listwise)	40					

Seven aspects can be seen from the table above. The first column indicates the variables which are the indicators from the instruments of this study. The second column (N) shows the number of participants who filled out the questionnaire for this study. The third column (Min) displays the smallest score that each statement got from the questionnaire. The fourth column (Max) shows the biggest score that each statement got from the questionnaire. The next column (Sum) indicates the total score of each indicator. The next is the mean which shows the average score of each indicator. The last column (SD) is the standard deviation that shows the consistency and the variability of the data. In the next part of this paragraph, the researchers explained the detailed analysis result from each indicator.

1. Reading for Curiosity

Students tend to be curious when the topic of the story is new and interesting to them. Curiosity drives students to explore and learn more about something. All students have curiosity in themselves because it is an essential behavior that all students have, although each student has a different level of curiosity. Table 2 shows the curiosity level of the participants in this study.

Table 2. Reading for Curiosity Analysis

	N	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	SD	Var
I like reading an English story with interesting topics.	40	2	4	118	2.95	.597	.356
I read an English story to learn new information about a topic that interests me	40	1	4	116	2.90	.709	.503
I like reading an English story with new topics.	40	2	4	111	2.78	.660	.435
Valid N (listwise)	40						

Based on Table 2, students in general agree with the three statements listed above, with mean scores between 2.78 and 2.95 on a 1-4 Likert scale. They were particularly motivated by interesting topics, as reflected in the highest mean score (2.95). The standard deviations indicate moderate consistency in responses, with some variability, especially regarding learning new information from English stories. Overall, the data suggest a positive tendency towards reading for curiosity.

2. Reading for Involvement

Students found a story interesting when they read about something they liked. An interesting story in this term is a story that makes the students get lost in the story until they lose track of time. The story feels so real that students can visualize it in their heads. The table reveals the students' opinions about involvement as a reading motivation.

Table 3. Reading for Involvement Analysis

	N	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	SD	Var
When I read about an interesting topic, I sometimes lose track of time	40	1	4	89	2.23	.698	.487
When I read an English fiction story, I feel like I believe the story.	40	1	4	106	2.65	.662	.438
I make pictures in my mind when I read an English story	40	1	4	121	3.03	.620	.384
I feel like I am involved in a story when I read.	40	1	4	106	2.65	.770	.592
Valid N (listwise)	40						

Table 3 shows that students were moderately engaged with reading because of involvement, with average scores between 2.23 and 3.03 on a 1-4 Likert scale. They were especially good at picturing the story in their minds, with the highest average score of 3.03. there is some variation in how students experience things like losing track of time or feeling involved in the story, as indicated by the standard deviation. Overall, students were generally positive about visualizing and engaging with the stories, even though they did not experience losing track of time or feeling deeply involved in reading stories.

3. Reading for Challenge

A challenge is one of the reasons why students read. The more difficult the stories are, the more motivated they are. Students read the story on repeat until they get what the writer tries to tell them as long as the story is interesting. Table 4 displays how students see a challenge as their story-reading motivator.

Table 4. Reading for Challenge Analysis

	N	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	SD	Var
I like a hard and challenging English story	40	1	4	90	2.25	.870	.756
An interesting story in an assignment makes me motivated to read	40	1	4	118	2.95	.714	.510
I like it when an English story makes me think of its content.	40	1	4	105	2.63	.807	.651
I would read an English story repeatedly if I found new vocabulary.	40	1	4	122	3.05	.783	.613
If an English story is interesting, I don't care how hard it is to read.	40	1	4	105	2.63	.807	.651
I always try to practice reading English stories so I can do better in the next reading material.	40	2	4	130	3.25	.630	.397
Valid N (listwise)	40						

The data reveals a range of responses regarding reading for challenge. The means vary from 2.25 to 3.25 on a 1-4 Likert scale. Students showed the highest average score of 3.25 for practicing reading English stories to improve in the next reading material, indicating a strong motivation to enhance their skills. They also showed a significant interest in reading English stories repeatedly when they discovered new vocabulary, with an average score of 3.05. On the other hand, with a lower average score of 2.25, students were less motivated to read when they found hard and challenging stories. The standard deviations suggest some variability in responses, especially regarding how the difficulty of a story affects their reading motivation. Overall, while students are motivated by new vocabulary and practice, they are less engaged with challenging content or stories that require significant effort.

4. Reading for Recognition

Students commonly want to be recognized and rewarded after they perform well in doing something. In the reading context, recognition is one of students' reasons to read because they want to get compliments for their performance from teachers or their peers. Table 5 shows how important recognition is for students' reading motivation.

Table 5. Reading for Recognition Analysis

	N	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	SD	Var
I like having the teacher say I read an English story well.	40	2	4	139	3.47	.640	.410
I like having my friends sometimes tell me I am a good reader.	40	2	4	129	3.23	.733	.538
I like to get compliments from a teacher and friends for my reading.	40	2	4	124	3.10	.709	.503
I am happy when the teacher asks me to read an English story in front of my classmates.	40	1	4	97	2.43	.781	.610
Valid N (listwise)	40						

The data shows that students highly valued positive feedback on reading for recognition, with means scores ranging from 2.43 to 3.47. They particularly appreciated praise from teachers, scoring the highest at 3.47. Compliments from friends and general recognition also receive positive scores, at 3.23 and 3.10. However, students were less eager to read in front of their classmates, with the lowest score of 2.43. Overall, students prefer receiving feedback and praise but are less comfortable with public reading.

5. Reading for Grades

Grades are one of the most important things for students because they can see their effort physically in studying. Students set getting good grades as their goal before they read. Students who read a lot tend to perform well academically. Table 6 points out the students' perspective about grades as their reading motivation.

Table 6. Reading for Grades Analysis

	N	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	SD	Var
Grades are a good way to see how well you are doing in reading English stories.	40	1	4	110	2.75	.776	.603
Getting good grades in reading English stories is important for me.	40	1	4	108	2.70	.687	.472
I am sure that having good reading ability can improve my English grades in general.	40	2	4	121	3.03	.733	.538
I am willing to work hard to read English stories to get good grades	40	1	4	103	2.58	.712	.507
I like my parents to ask me about my reading grade.	40	1	4	103	2.58	.747	.558
Valid N (listwise)	40						

Table 6 reveals that students viewed good reading skills as useful for their overall English grades, with a mean score of 3.03. However, they were less motivated by grades themselves, with a lower mean of 2.70 and 2.58 for the importance of grades and parental inquiries about reading grades. Students also show limited willingness to work hard for good grades in reading, scoring 2.58. Overall, while students appreciated the connection between reading skills and grades, grades are not a major motivator for reading stories.

6. Reading for Social

Doing activities together with friends is a fun thing. In the educational context, studying together is an opportunity for students to be braver, more confident, and more critical to show their ability. This can also apply to reading activities as shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Reading for Social Analysis

	N	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	SD	Var
I like to visit the library often with my friends to read English stories.	40	1	4	90	2.25	.809	.654
I like to help my siblings to do an English reading assignment.	40	1	4	107	2.68	1.095	1.199
I like to share the topic I read in an English story with my classmates.	40	1	4	108	2.70	.758	.574
I like to help classmates to understand an English story.	40	1	4	117	2.93	.764	.584
I like it when my classmates discuss an English story with me	40	1	4	113	2.83	.712	.507
My classmates and I enjoy sharing knowledge from the English stories that we read	40	1	4	114	2.85	.834	.695
Valid N (listwise)	40						

The data shows a range of responses about reading for social indicator. On average, with a mean of 2.25, students reported the least interest in visiting the library with friends and a higher mean, 2.68, which indicates higher interest in helping siblings with English reading assignments. They were more inclined to share (mean=2.70) and discuss (mean=2.83) the topics of English stories with their peers. Helping classmates understand stories (mean=2.93) and enjoying knowledge-sharing activities (mean=2.85) received the highest rating. The standard deviations indicate some variability with the greatest variation seen in helping siblings with assignments.

7. Reading for Competition

Students read because they want to perform better than their peers in reading. Competitive students usually have a specific list of targets of how many books they have to read, how many times they need to finish a book and many more. Table 8 displays how competition drives students to read stories.

Table 8. Reading for Competition Analysis

	N	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	SD	Var
I try to understand an English story more than my classmates.	40	1	4	106	2.65	.662	.438
I try to answer questions about an English story correctly more than my classmates.	40	1	4	106	2.65	.700	.490
I like to finish my reading assignments before other students.	40	1	4	88	2.20	.687	.472
I like being the only one who knows the answer of something we read.	40	1	4	90	2.25	.840	.705
I try to read an English story harder when I know there is someone who reads better than me.	40	1	4	114	2.85	.770	.592
I am willing to work hard to read better than my classmates.	40	1	4	113	2.82	.712	.507
Valid N (listwise)	40						

Table 7 shows that students have a moderate level of competitive spirit when it comes to English stories. On average, they tried to understand and answer questions about stories better than their classmates (mean=2.65), but they were less concerned about finishing assignments before others (mean=2.20) or being the only one with the right answer (mean=2.25). They were more motivated to put in extra effort when they knew others were performing better (mean=2.82). Overall, while students were moderately competitive and motivated by others' performance, they were not extremely driven by being the top student or having unique knowledge.

8. Reading for Compliance

Students in the teacher-oriented school environment tend to read because they want to fulfill their teachers' requests. Pleasure and enjoyment cannot be found in this type of reading because students just want to get things done rather than have a reading experience. Table 9 displays how compliance becomes the students' reading motivation.

Table 9. Reading for Compliance Analysis

	N	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	SD	Var
I always do an English story reading assignment from the teacher.	40	1	4	103	2.58	.712	.507
Finishing every reading assignment is very important to me.	40	2	4	106	2.65	.580	.336
I read to understand the story.	40	2	4	121	3.03	.577	.333
I always try to finish my reading assignments on time	40	1	4	111	2.78	.768	.589
When the teacher discusses challenging an English story topic, I feel responsible for solving it.	40	1	4	107	2.68	.730	.533
Reading interesting an English story topic makes me motivated to understand the content.	40	2	4	127	3.18	.636	.404
Valid N (listwise)	40						

Table 8 shows that students generally see some value in completing English story assignments, with average scores around 2.58 to 2.78 for doing and finishing assignments. They place more importance on understanding the story (mean = 3.03) and are most motivated by interesting topics (mean = 3.18). Students also feel moderately responsible for tackling challenging topics discussed in class (mean = 2.68). Overall, while completing assignments and meeting deadlines are moderately important, engaging content is the biggest motivator for understanding the material.

Reading for compliance is the top motivator with a mean score of 16.90 and a high average score of 3.18 for enjoying engaging content (Table 9). Reading for challenge follows with a mean of 16.75 and a top score of 3.25 for improving through tough reading (Table 4). Reading for social is next, with a mean of 16.22 and a strong score of 2.93 for helping classmates (Table 7). Reading for competition has a mean of 15.43 and a notable score of 2.85 for competing with peers (Table 8). Reading for recognition also plays a role, especially for teacher praise (mean = 3.47) (Table 5). Reading for grades is less motivating, with a mean of 13.63 and a score of 3.03 for linking reading skills to overall grades (Table 6). Lastly, reading for curiosity has the lowest impact, with a mean of 8.85 and a moderate score of 2.95 (Table 2). Overall, compliance and challenge are the main motivators, with social, competition, and recognition factors also important, while grades and curiosity matter less.

Discussion

Based on the findings, this study explored female students' motivation in reading stories in 8 aspects. These 8 aspects were categorized into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. As stated by Wigfield et al. (2004), intrinsic motivation contains curiosity, involvement, and challenge, while extrinsic motivation contains recognition, grades, social, competition, and compliance.

This study revealed that female students in an Islamic senior high school in Semarang believed that compliance was the biggest factor that gave them higher motivation to read stories. They found it important that they had to read to finish the assignment from the teacher. Students did not have a genuine interest in reading stories until the teacher assigned them. It indicated that they were still in teacher-centered learning. Even though, students believed that they were more motivated when the teacher gave them interesting topics in their reading assignment. It determined that the teaching reading method has an impactful effect on students' reading motivation (Hasan and Iqbal, 2023). It is such a huge responsibility for the teacher to conduct a more student-centered learning environment, therefore students do not always rely on teacher support. In addition, the cooperation between teachers and the school to make students love to read could be an impactful strategy. Tisa et al. (2021) stated that teachers, librarians, and the principal of the school have to collaborate to provide more relevant books in the school library. Creating a comfortable reading environment is the key to this strategy.

Students also liked it when the teacher gave them challenging stories because they could learn new vocabulary. It is reasonable that students felt that way as this study found that challenge was the second motivator for students in reading stories. Students had the desire to learn and explore the topic of the reading material even though they found it difficult, as long as the topic of the material was interesting (Aliman, 2021). Reading the material repeatedly until they understood boosted their reading motivation. This is such an insightful finding that students had this intrinsic motivation and were eager to read as long as the teacher gave them interesting reading material. Selecting suitable topics for reading materials is a crucial part of a teacher's lesson plan since it boosts the excitement of the students (Namaziandost et al., 2022). Selecting a reading topic based on the student's background, level, or preference needs to be a consideration for the teacher.

Social got the third place that motivated students to read stories. It indicates that students saw reading stories as a social activity. They found reading fun when they could do reading activities together with their friend. They liked to talk about their opinions or knowledge they got from stories they read. It shows that in the reading activity class, students tended to enjoy group activities more. Maneba et al., (2021) stated that studying together can improve students' courage, confidence, and critical thinking. It can be understood that the young generation especially females tend to follow what others do. If one of the students who originally loved reading stories shares their experience with their classmates, it can be a strategy to influence others.

On the flip side, curiosity got the last position as the students' motivator in reading stories. Even though, high curiosity is the most important aspect that students should have in the learning process (Suhirman & Ghazali, 2022). This indicates that students did not have enough self-reading motivation. It is understandable as they depended on teachers' support in engaging them to read more. Students only read when it was required. Therefore, rather than enjoying reading as a pleasurable activity they only skimmed the

story and looked for what the teacher asked them. Over time, this could cause them to have a low ability to comprehend the reading material and think critically. Moreover, they missed out on the moral value of a fictional story and they were not entertained by it while it was the main goal of a fictional story.

Looking back to the category of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, the result that has been discussed above proved that female students in common were extrinsically motivated as this study got compliance and social in the highest position. Meanwhile, challenge is included in intrinsic motivation. This is a good sign and opportunity that students were not fully extrinsically motivated in reading stories. There was still a high chance of them fostering the love of reading stories sincerely without depending on external factors.

After all, female students had high motivation in reading stories although it commonly relied on extrinsic motivation. These findings are in line with the previous studies that revealed female students had high motivation in reading (Abdullah and Yunus, 2019; Murtafi'ah and Putro, 2020; Septiani and Susanto, 2019). On the contrary, this study rejected Hek and Kraaykamp's (2023) idea that female students were intrinsically motivated to read. This contrast is reasonable because Hek and Kraaykamp (2023) had different areas in conducting the research, which was in The Netherlands while the three other studies and this study were conducted in Indonesia.

In final thought, teachers have a big responsibility to keep engaging students with interesting reading activities. Students have good potential to improve their motivation in reading a story as they like to challenge themselves to practice more when they find new vocabulary in a story. Reading group activities also can be a consideration as they have good social interactions with their peers.

4. CONCLUSION

This study which investigated female students' motivation in reading stories in an Islamic senior high school in Semarang, Indonesia, reveals a beneficial insight into English language learning specifically in reading stories. The findings from the questionnaire disclose that common female students were extrinsically motivated to read stories. Even though, researchers found something unique that students were not fully extrinsically motivated since they liked to challenge themselves to read difficult stories. They believed compliance, challenge, and social were motivated them the most to read stories.

The researchers suggest that teachers should engage students more with interesting stories. Conducting a group reading act to make reading stories a habit, the school also needs to create an environment that loves reading by providing some facilities that support it, like a comfortable library that offers many reading resources. Moreover, this study was conducted in an Islamic senior high school in Semarang, which did not generally portray female students' motivation in reading stories, therefore, many areas need to be explored because each area may have a different point of view due to the diverse culture and living environment. Future researchers should try to dig more into the topic of this study. Interviews can be conducted to explore the deeper information about female students' motivation in reading stories. In addition, future researchers may investigate this topic at different levels of students.

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