

Arab Society of English Language Studies

From the Selected Works of Arab World English Journal AWEJ

Winter December 15, 2018

Motivation and Habits of Recreational Reading of University Educated Youth in the United Arab Emirates

Tamimount Ennaji , Wala K. Ahmed , Maitha S. Al Saedi , Soumia Lounis & Taoufik Zoubeidi, *Arab Society of English Language Studies*



Available at: <https://works.bepress.com/arabworldenglishjournal-awej/597/>

Motivation and Habits of Recreational Reading of University Educated Youth in the United Arab Emirates

Tamimount Ennaji

Department of Statistics, UAE University, Al Ain, UAE

Wala K. Ahmed

Department of Statistics, UAE University, Al Ain, UAE

Maitha S. Al Saedi

Department of Statistics, UAE University, Al Ain, UAE

Soumia Lounis

Department of Curriculum and Instruction, UAE University, Al Ain, UAE

Taoufik Zoubeidi

Department of Statistics, UAE University, Al Ain, UAE

Abstract

A claim made this decade that 'Arabs don't read' raised concerns among civil society and authorities in the Arab countries which resulted in growing research to investigate this claim and major initiatives to promote reading among Arabs. This paper aims to contribute to our knowledge about reading in this region by studying the motivation and habits of recreational reading of university educated youth in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). It specifically aims to answer the questions: what are the recreational reading frequency, and the type and language of the reading material? Which personal characteristics correlate with recreational reading habits? And which factors impact the motivation to read? The findings are based on a survey of 775 undergraduate students at UAE University. The survey questionnaire included an adult reading motivation scale developed by Schutte and Malouff (2007) which was modified after assessing its goodness-of-fit to the UAE context using confirmatory factor analysis. Pearson's chi-square test, Poisson regression and ANOVA were used to identify the correlates of reading habits and compare motivation scores across demographic groups. Seventy-one percent of the students read at least one book for pleasure in the last six months and they read, on average, for 2.3 hours per week. Reading frequency depends on gender, the student's secondary education, and the parents' education. Gender, parents' education have significant effects on the motivation scores and the preferred language of reading (p -value < 0.01). Students read more during the academic year than in the vacation.

Keywords: Arab region, motivation to read, reading for pleasure, reading habits, the United Arab Emirates Introduction

Cite as: Zoubeidi, T., Ennaji, T., Ahmed, W. K., Al Saedi, M. S., Lounis, S. (2018). Motivation and Habits of Recreational Reading of University Educated Youth in the United Arab Emirates. *Arab World English Journal*, 9 (4), 257-269. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol9no4.19>

Introduction

Reading is essential for knowledge acquisition and communication. In this era of knowledge economy, the development and dissemination of reading abilities have become an essential objective of authorities and civil society worldwide. National reading campaigns and initiatives to promote reading were launched in many countries such as Canada, USA, UK, and by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) which celebrates annually the World Book and Copyright Day on 23 April (National Reading Campaign, 2018; National Education Association, 2018; National Literacy Trust, 2018; UNESCO, 2018). There is a stronger need for initiatives to develop reading and identify reading habits and what motivates people to read in developing countries because of the challenges they face in literacy and human development. For example, the UAE government declared 2016 as the UAE Reading Year and launched an integrated strategy to produce a reading generation (National Literacy Strategy, 2018). Moreover, led by the UAE Vice President, the Mohamed Bin Rashed Al Maktoum Foundation (MBRF) launched the Arab Reading Challenge which is the largest-ever Arab literacy initiative to encourage students in Arab countries to read (MBRF, 2018). This is a much-needed initiative in a region having among the lowest literacy and human development indices in the world, better only to South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.

While illiteracy remains a challenge for Arab societies where about 33% of adults (15 years or older) were illiterate in 2015 (UNDP, 2016), the UAE has achieved a high rate of literacy (90%). However, reading ability is a higher level of literacy which is not reflected by the literacy rate. Thus, there is a need for specific research about reading motivation and reading abilities in the UAE. Although there has been a growing interest among researchers in the last decade to investigate the claim that ‘Arabs don’t Read’ (Martin, Martins, & Naqvi, 2017; MBRF & UNDP, 2016), research about readership and motivation to read in the UAE and the Arab region remains limited. MBRF and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) developed in 2016 the Arab Reading Index as a measure to assess the status of reading and cultural development in the Arab World (MBRF & UNDP, 2016). Other published studies include the Arab Reading survey about reading habits among visitors of the International Sharjah Book Fair in 2011 (Wischenbart, 2011). The survey aimed to characterize reading habits and related media consumption in the UAE. This survey targeted a specific segment of the UAE population consisting of visitors of the book fair who most likely differ in their motivation to read and reading habits from the general population. A more extensive survey was conducted by the Next Page Foundation which aimed to characterize the reading habits, types of reading material, and attitudes towards reading in nine Arab countries (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Tunisia) (NextPage, 2007a & 2007b). Other studies investigated the impact of early reading habits on the reading literacy of Qatari undergraduate students (Bendriss & Golkowska, 2011), the role of Jordanian schools in encouraging students’ outside reading (Banihani & Abu-Ashour, 2015), the reading habits of young Emirati women (Khoury & Duzgun, 2009), the reading habits and interests of Saudi students at a university-level preparatory year program (Rajab & Al-Sadi, 2015), and the benefits and challenges of establishing a reading culture in Oman (Al-Mahmoodi & Denman, 2017). Other published research about reading competence in the UAE concerned reading for academic purposes (O’Sullivan, 2004; Demirci & Gobert, 2015; Alsheikh & Elhoweris, 2011).

In this manuscript, we study the motivation and habits of recreational reading of students at a large public university in the UAE as a proxy for the educated youth in the UAE. Moreover, the study focusses on recreational reading because, as discussed in the next section, research suggests that it contributes more to the development of reading competence than school-related reading.

Reading Motivation

There is a consensus among researchers and educators that reading competence is a prerequisite for academic success and literacy (Chapman, Tunmer, & Prochnow, 2000). Given this critical role of reading, extensive research was done to identify the significant factors for the development of reading competence (Conradi, Jang, & McKenna, 2014). In addition to cognitive factors such as memory capacity and reasoning ability (Alloway & Gregory, 2013), research suggests that reading proficiency is primarily a function of interest in and motivation for reading (Malloy, Marinak, & Gambrell, 2010). For example, results of the PISA 2010 survey which assessed reading abilities of students from 64 countries show that interest in reading predicted reading comprehension, and students who enjoyed reading the most performed significantly better than those who enjoyed reading the least. In this context, the International Reading Association has emphasized the vital role of reading motivation in reading development (Gambrell, 2011). These findings imply that motivational factors should form the main components of any reading development program. To achieve reading competency, subjects must be motivated to undertake literacy activities that improve their reading abilities. Irvin, Meltzed, & Dukes (2007) state that “motivation to engage is the first step on the road to improving literacy habits and skills” (p. 32).

Gambrell (2011) defines the motivation to read “as the likelihood of engaging in reading or choosing to read” (p. 172). This motivation is a multi-dimensional construct reflecting intrinsic and extrinsic incentives (Schiefele & Schaffner, 2016). Intrinsic reading motivation refers to the willingness to read because reading is satisfying or rewarding in its own right. Extrinsic reading motivation refers to reasons that are external to the activity of reading and the text content where the reader aims to achieve particular outcomes such as improving school performance or being praised by others (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). Another distinction in reading motivation refers to academic (or school-related) versus recreational reading motivation (De Naeghel & Van Keer, 2013).

Academic reading is done at school or for homework whereas recreational reading is done in leisure time. Research suggests that recreational reading contributes more to the development of reading competence than school-related reading (De Naeghel, Van Keer, Vansteenkiste, & Rosseel, 2012) and that the academic reading motivation may be confounded with the more general motives of students to learn or to achieve in school (Elliot, 2005).

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to investigate the recreational reading habits, types and language of reading material, and motivation to read of students at public universities in the UAE: the case of UAE University. The study will focus on recreational book reading rather than academic reading because, as stated above, the latter is more reflective of reading competencies. Moreover, investigation of academic reading is confounded with academic performance which is a more

researched subject. In this report, we focus on the recreational reading of books in all formats, and we exclude newspapers, magazines, and social media.

The research questions in this study are:

1. What are the recreational reading habits of students in terms of reading frequency, and the type and language of the reading material?
2. Which students' background characteristics significantly impact recreational reading habits?
3. Which factors impact students' motivation to read?

We also test the validity in the UAE context of an adult reading motivation scale (Schutte & Malouff, 2007) developed on a sample of Australians. This scale is, to the best of our knowledge, the first ever validated scale for the UAE context.

Methodology

This study is based on cross-sectional data collected through a survey of a random sample of 775 undergraduate students at UAE University. Sample selection was stratified by gender such that the sample size from each gender is proportional to the corresponding stratum size. Students were sampled by randomly selecting course sections for males and females in the fall 2017 semester.

The target population consisted of undergraduate adult students at UAEU (i.e., age ≥ 18 years), excluding medical students. Since undergraduate education at UAEU is gender-segregated, we randomly selected 42 females and 15 males course sections from the Fall 2017 class schedule across all colleges, excluding the College of Medicine and Health Sciences. The total enrollment in the sampled course sections was 1575 students. After excluding the minor students (age < 18 years), and the students who declined to participate in the study, a total of 775 completed questionnaires were collected and analyzed using IBM SPSS (version 23).

The survey questionnaire consisted of four parts: Part 1 includes 10 items about the demographic profile of students. Part 2 contains 10 items about the recreational reading habits of students. Part 3, composed of 8 items, covered the development of the interest for recreational book reading. Part 4 is an adult reading motivation scale consisting of 21 items developed by Schutte and Malouff (2007). This scale is sub-divided into 4 dimensions (sub-scales), namely, Reading as Part of the Self, Reading Efficacy, Reading for Recognition, and Reading to Do Well in Other Realms. To assess the goodness-of-fit of this scale to the data, we performed a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and reliability (internal consistency) analysis (RA) of the 4 sub-scales. The resulting CFA goodness-of-fit statistics were SRMR = 0.048, RMSEA = 0.067, and CFI = 0.518. These values indicate a good fit, moderate fit, and poor fit, respectively. Moreover, the internal consistency measures of the 4 sub-scales were Cronbach Alpha = 0.836, 0.302, 0.727 and 0.651, respectively. While the three highest values indicate good internal consistency of the relevant questionnaire items, the second measure (0.302) is too low which suggests that the survey items measuring the second subscale (Reading Efficacy) are measuring more than one dimension. Given these mixed results, we run an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with an oblique rotation to determine the reading motivation dimensions in the data. This analysis

suggests the same four dimensions (sub-scales) with some modifications of the items loading on each sub-scale. The sub-scales reported in Schutte & Malouff (2007) consisted of the following questionnaire items (see Schutte & Malouff (2007) for the item statements):

- Sub-scale - Reading as Part of the Self: items 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10 and 11
- Sub-scale – Reading Efficacy: items 1, 14, 16, 17, 19 and 20.
- Sub-scale – Reading for Recognition: items 12, 13, 15.
- Sub-scale – Reading to Do Well in Other Realms: items: 7, 8, 18, 21.

The sub-scales extracted from EFA of the collected data were composed of the following items:

- Sub-scale - Reading as Part of the Self: items 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 16
- Sub-scale – Reading Efficacy: items 1, 2,7, and 8.
- Sub-scale – Reading for Recognition: items 12, 13, 14, 15, and 17.
- Sub-scale – Reading to Do Well in Other Realms: items: 18, 19, 20, and 21.

The corresponding internal consistency measures of the modified sub-scales were Cronbach Alpha = 0.839, 0.597, 0.702, 0.724 which suggests an adequate internal consistency. In the sequel of this report we will use the modified sub-scales.

In analyzing the data, descriptive statistics and graphical displays were used to summarize the data. Pearson's chi-square test was used to assess the relationship between categorical variables. Poisson regression was used to identify the factors significantly impacting the frequency of book reading. Motivation scores were compared across demographic groups using ANOVA, and using Kruskal-Wallis test when the assumptions of ANOVA were not satisfied.

Results

Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Eighty-one percent (626) of the respondents were females which corresponds to their percentage in the 2016-17 UAEU student population (81%). The demographic characteristics of the respondents were: 49% live in the University hostels and 51% live off-campus, 93% are single, 97% did their secondary education in the UAE of whom 22% did it in a private school. Most private schools in the UAE follow the American or the British System while the public schools follow the UAE education system.

Twenty six percent of the selected students are from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS), 26% are from Engineering and IT (COE & CIT), 20% are from Business and Economics (CBE), 11% are from Science (COS), and 16% are from other colleges. Forty-one percent have a GPA of B or higher, 47% have a GPA between C and B, and 12% have GPA less than C. The percentages of students whose fathers' and mothers' have at least a college education are 46% and 36%, respectively.

Reading habits

Forty-one percent of the students read at least three books for pleasure in the last six months which corresponds to an average of about three books per student in the last six months. Eighty percent of the students declared reading books for pleasure. Among these claimed readers, 11%

did not read any books in the previous six months which corresponds to an overall percentage of 71% of students have read at least one book for pleasure in the last six months. Given the differences of perceptions of who is a reader and who is not, we consider the latter figure (71%), with an error of $\pm 3\%$, to be a more realistic estimate of the percentage of recreational readers in the student population. In the sequel, we will define a reader as someone who classifies oneself as a recreational reader and has read at least one book for a recreational purpose in the last six months.

Table 1 *Poisson regression of number of books read versus demographic profile*

Predictor	Coefficient(B)	Exp(B)	95% CI for Exp(B) ⁽¹⁾		p-value ⁽²⁾
Gender					0.000
Male	-0.326	0.722	0.636	0.816	
Female	-	1	-	-	
Where did you do most of your high school?					0.001
Private school in the UAE	-0.420	0.657	0.516	0.847	
Public school in the UAE	-0.263	0.769	0.616	0.974	
Outside the UAE	-	1	-	-	
What was the education system in your high school?					0.210
UAE	-0.247	0.781	0.589	1.056	
British	-0.241	0.785	0.570	1.105	
American	-0.344	0.709	0.519	0.990	
Other	-	1	-	-	
Living in the university hostels?					0.001
Yes	0.148	1.160	1.061	1.267	
No	-	1	-	-	
Number of years of studies					
Outside the UAE	0.067	1.069	1.030	1.110	0.000
GPA					0.116
Less than 1.75	0.105	1.111	0.892	1.378	
1.75 – 1.99	-0.169	0.844	0.647	1.091	
2.00 – 2.99	-0.072	0.931	0.802	1.084	
3.00 – 3.59	-0.137	0.872	0.740	1.030	
3.60 – 4.00	-	1	-	-	
Father's education Level					0.007
Primary of less	0.006	1.006	0.842	1.205	
Middle of high school	0.178	1.195	1.020	1.407	
College or university	0.026	1.026	0.873	1.213	
Mater or higher	-	1	-	-	
Mother's education Level					0.091
Primary of less	-0.239	0.241	0.639	0.981	
Middle of high school	-0.236	0.229	0.647	0.975	
College or university	-0.281	0.166	0.615	0.936	
Mater or higher	-	1	-	-	

(1) 95% Profile Likelihood Confidence Interval for Exp(B)

(2) Likelihood Ratio Test

Females read on average 39% more books than males (p-value = 0.000), on average 2.7 vs 2.0 books per semester (Table 1). Students who did at least some of their secondary education outside the UAE read more books than those who did it in the UAE (p-value = 0.001). For each additional year of primary or secondary education outside the UAE, students read 7% more books per semester (p-value = 0.000). Students living in the university hostels read 16% more books than those living off-campus (p-value = 0.001). Students whose fathers have only middle or secondary education read more than those whose fathers have a master degree (p-value = 0.007).

Sixty percent of the readers read during weekends and 79% read no more than 3 hours per week which corresponds to an average of 2.3 hours per week. Significantly more females read on weekends (63%) than males (41%) (p-value = 0.000).

During the vacation, 34% of the students read books for pleasure daily or weekly, while 20% read newspapers, and 15% read magazines daily or weekly. During the academic year, 39% read books for pleasure daily or weekly, 24% read newspapers and 17% read magazines daily or weekly. Students read books and newspapers significantly more often during the academic year than during vacation (p-values = 0.002).

Reading in Arabic or both in Arabic and English are equally preferred (44%) by readers. Females significantly differ from males in the preferred language of reading (p-value = 0.005), see Table 2. Females prefer reading in Arabic only (47%) more than males (31%) in contrast to reading in English only which is favored by 10% of females versus 22% of males. Moreover, readers whose father or mother has at most a primary education level tend to read in Arabic only (60%) in contrast to those whose father or mother holds a master or higher degree (17%). More readers with higher educated parents tend to be bilingual (Arabic and English) (p-value = 0.001). Preference for reading language significantly differs according to the type of high school (p-value = 0.001). Students who did most of their high school in the UAE, tend to be more bilingual (45%) than students who studied outside the UAE (17%). Finally, among those who studied in the UAE, reading in Arabic only is preferred more by those who studied in the UAE education system (48%) than those who studied in the British (27%) and American (16%) education systems (p-value = 0.000).

About two-third of the readers prefer print books. Print books are preferred by females more than males (75% vs 52%; p-value = 0.000), and graduates of public high schools in the UAE (75%) more than graduates of other types of high school (58%) (p-value = 0.008). Preference for electronic books tend to increase with the father's education level (p-value = 0.046).

Moreover, when asked to specify the criteria by which they select books to read, readers mentioned the book title (57%), the recommendation of family/friends (42%), best author (30%), bestseller (28%), and advertisement (12%).

Table 2 *Language of reading versus demographic profile*

	Language of readings			Total (%)	p-value ⁽¹⁾
	Arabic Count (%)	English Count (%)	Both Count (%)		
Gender					
Male	20 (31.2)	14 (21.9)	30 (46.9)	64 (100)	0.005
Female	212 (46.7)	44 (9.7)	198 (43.6)	454 (100)	
Where did you do most of your high school?					
Private school in the UAE	24 (32.0)	15 (20.0)	36 (48.0)	75 (100)	0.001
Public school in the UAE	169 (45.1)	37 (9.9)	169 (45.1)	375 (100)	
Outside the UAE	5 (41.7)	5 (41.7)	2 (16.7)	12 (100)	
What was the education system in your high school?					
UAE	176 (48.2)	34 (9.3)	155 (42.5)	365 (100)	0.000
British	10 (27.0)	5 (13.5)	22 (59.5)	37 (100)	
American	7 (15.9)	14 (31.8)	23 (52.3)	44 (100)	
Living in the university hostels?					
Yes	112 (46.9)	27 (11.3)	100 (41.8)	239 (100)	0.205
No	85 (38.6)	28 (12.7)	107 (48.6)	220 (100)	
GPA					
Less than 1.75	11 (44.0)	1 (4.0)	13 (52.0)	25 (100)	0.051
1.75 – 1.99	6 (33.3)	4 (22.2)	8 (44.4)	18 (100)	
2.00 – 2.99	81 (42.6)	18 (9.5)	91 (47.9)	190 (100)	
3.00 – 3.59	38 (42.2)	10 (11.1)	42 (46.7)	90 (100)	
3.60 – 4.00	11 (24.4)	12 (26.7)	22 (48.9)	45 (100)	
Father's education level					
Primary or less	53 (60.2)	6 (6.8)	29 (33.0)	88 (100)	0.001
Middle or high school	74 (42.8)	22 (12.7)	77 (44.5)	173 (100)	
College or university	61 (39.1)	22 (14.1)	73 (46.8)	156 (100)	
Master or higher	7 (16.7)	7 (16.7)	28 (66.7)	42 (100)	
Mother's education level					
Primary or less	57 (51.8)	12 (10.9)	41 (37.3)	110 (100)	0.000
Middle or high school	97 (48.7)	17 (8.5)	85 (42.7)	199 (100)	
College or university	40 (30.8)	19 (14.6)	71 (54.6)	130 (100)	
Master or higher	3 (15.0)	8 (40.0)	9 (45.0)	20 (100)	

(1) Pearson's chi-square test

Development of interest in reading books

Forty-nine percent of the readers started reading books at school while 31% started much later, not due to school or family. Females significantly differ from males with respect to when they started reading (p-value = 0.000). More females started reading at school (51%) than males (35%). The sources of books read by students are purchased books (84%), free online books (66%), borrowed from friends (60%), home library (56%), and public library (45%), see Table 3.

Table 3 *Reading preferences*

Variable	Count	Percent
What topics do you read more often?		
Fiction and literature	292	50.3
History & politics	290	50.0
Health and well-being and relationships	284	48.9
Design and arts	275	47.4
Comics & graphic novels	265	45.8
Philosophy and social sciences	238	41.0
Science and technology	208	35.8
Business and economics	177	30.5
Religion	216	27.9
Other	47	8.1
Travel	1	0.2
When did you start reading books?		
At school	264	48.2
Family member	100	18.2
Mosque	10	1.8
Much later	174	31.8
From where do you get most of the books you read?		
Buy books	453	81.3
Free online books	373	67.1
Borrow from friends	332	59.6
Home library	308	55.3
Borrow from public library	251	45.1
What would make you read more books?		
More books on topics I am interested in	517	74.1
More free time	419	60.1
Easier access to books	274	39.3
More books in my preferred language of reading	264	37.9
Less expensive books	227	32.5
More events promoting reading	188	27.0
Other	10	1.4

The motivation for reading books

Both the overall motivation score as well as the scores for each of the four motivation dimensions are above 3 (out of a maximum score of 5). Students read 79% more books for each one-point increase in the overall motivation score (p -value = 0.000). Reading as Part of Self has the highest impact on reading frequency with a 65% increase in the number of books for each one-point increase in the score while holding the other motivation subscales constant. The next highest impact on reading frequency is achieved by Reading Efficacy, Reading for Recognition, and Reading to Do Well in Other Realms, respectively.

Males have a higher overall motivation score (3.46 ± 0.52) than females (3.21 ± 0.53) (p -value = 0.000). Moreover, males have higher scores than females in the dimensions "Reading as

Part of Self,” “Reading for Recognition,” and “Reading to Do Well in Other Realms” (p-values < 0.05).

Graduates of the UAE education system have higher scores of Reading for Recognition than graduates of the British and American systems (p-value = 0.002). They don’t significantly differ in the other dimensions. Students whose fathers or mothers are higher educated have higher scores in “Reading as Part of Self” and “Reading to Do Well in Other Realms” as well as in the overall score (p-value < 0.010).

Discussion

The percentage of recreational readers ($71\% \pm 3\%$) is similar to the percentages of those who read at least one book per year among the 15 – 24 years old in Jordan (70%) and lower than in Algeria (74%), and Saudi Arabia (79%) (NextPage, 2007a & 2007b). In England, about 80% of the 18 – 29 years old read books (Alasdair, 2013) and over 90% of the 15 – 24 years old visitors of the Sharjah Book Fair declared reading books (Wisichenbart, 2011). Readers among UAEU students read books for 2.3 hours per week which is lower than the weekly average reading time of adult readers, in Jordan (3.4 hours), Saudi Arabia (4.9 hours) and Algeria (6.5 hours), as reported in NextPage (2007a & 2007b). On the other hand, the UAEU weekly reading times are higher than the corresponding times for adults in these countries as reported by MBRF & UNDP (2016), Jordan (0.6 hours), Saudi Arabia (0.5 hours) and Algeria (0.4 hours). Though these latter figures are for adult readers, we don’t expect the reading time for the 15 – 24 years in these countries to be much lower because the younger readers tend to read more than the older readers in the Arab region. Moreover, 14% of the UAEU student readers declared reading daily as compared to adult readers in Jordan (18%), Saudi Arabia (21%), Algeria (32%) (MBRF & UNDP, 2016) and about 18% in England (Alasdair, 2013). These results suggest that the percentage of readers and the frequency of reading among the UAE students is somewhat low when compared to the region and developed countries. This highlights the need for sustained programs to develop leadership among the youth in the UAE.

Reading frequency increases with reading motivation and it is most impacted by the intrinsic motivation Reading as Part of Self while it is least impacted by the Reading to Do Well in Other Realms dimension. Thus, initiatives that raise self-interest and pleasure in reading will have a greater impact on reading and reading frequency. The time period at which students started reading books does not seem to significantly impact reading and reading frequency. We found that males have an overall motivation score higher than females, in contrast with NextPage (2007a). Children of educated parents have higher scores in overall motivation and in Reading as Part of Self and Reading to Do Well in Other Realms. This may reflect the role of educated parents in promoting reading to their children.

Females read more than males which is in line with results of studies in other Arab countries and England. Moreover, while reading in Arabic only or both in Arabic and English are equally preferred by readers in the UAE, readers in Egypt and Saudi Arabia prefer to read in Arabic only. Likewise, Lebanese, Moroccan and Tunisian readers prefer to read in Arabic unless it was online in which they read in English or French (NextPage, 2007a & 2007b). About 70% of the

UAEU students prefer print books which is similar to the preference of adult readers in England (76%) (Alasdair, 2013).

The findings of this study done on a sample of UAE students, who represent a segment of the educated youth in the UAE, suggest the need for incentives and sustained initiatives to raise the motivation for reading of individuals in the UAE involving parents, schools, government and other social forums and to provide easy access to literature/ recreational books through educational institution libraries or public libraries.

Conclusion

In this study we investigated the recreational reading habits, types and language of reading material, and motivation to read of undergraduate students at a large public university in the UAE. We found that seventy-one percent of the students read at least one book for pleasure in the last six months and they read books for 2.3 hours per week, on average. The frequency of reading is significantly dependent on gender, the secondary education of the student, and the parents' education. About two-third of the readers prefer print books and reading in Arabic or both in Arabic and English are equally preferred. Males have a higher overall motivation score than females, and students whose fathers or mothers are higher educated have higher motivation scores. There is a need to further study the reading habits and motivation of other segments of the society and develop evidence-based initiatives to promote reading.

Acknowledgment

This work was support by UAE University under Grant (Number: ERS_2017_5650).

About the Authors

Tamimount Ennaji is an instructor of statistics at UAE University. She holds a Master degree in Business Mathematics and Computer Science, specialization in Statistics, from the Vrije University Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Her research interests focus on Applied Statistics in general, and statistical modeling in particular. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1114-0602>

Wala Ahmed holds a Bachelor degree in statistics from UAE University (2018). She is interested is in research in statistics. <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0972-0349>

Maitha Saeed Al Saedi graduated from UAE University in Fall 2017 with a Bachelor degree in Statistics. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3812-5410>

Soumia Lounis is a student majoring in English language Education for elementary schools at UAU. The anticipated date of graduation is Spring 2019. <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4990-3422>

Taoufik Zoubeidi is a Professor at UAE University with over 30 years of work experience in academia, statistical consultancy, and academic administration. He holds a PhD in Statistics from the University of Michigan. <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5520-7664>

References

- Alasdair, G. (2013). Reading Habits Survey 2013 - A National Survey of Reading Habits and Attitudes to Books Amongst Adults in England, *DJS Research Limited*, <http://www.djsresearch.co.uk>
- Alloway, T.P. & Gregory, D. (2013). The Predictive Ability of IQ and Working Memory Scores in Literacy in an Adult Population. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 57, 51–56.
- Al-Mahmoodi, R., & Denman, C. (2017). Establishing a Reading Culture in Arabic and English in Oman. *Arab World English Journal*, 8 (1).
- Alsheikh, N.O. & Elhoweris, H.M. (2011). Read in English: High School Students' Motivation. *Journal of Applied Linguistics*.
- Banihani, M.S. & Abu-Ashour, K.M. (2015). The Role of Jordanian Schools in Encouraging Students' Outside Reading. *Journal of Education and Social Policy*, 2, (1).
- Bendriss, R. & Golkowska, K. (2011). Early Reading Habits and Their Impact on the Reading Literacy of Qatari Undergraduate Students. *Arab World English Journal*, 2, (4), 37-57.
- Chapman, J.W., Tunmer, W.E., & Prochnow, J.E. (2000). Early Reading-Related Skills and Performance, Reading Self-Concept, and the Development of Academic Self-Concept: A Longitudinal Study. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 92, 703–708.
- Conradi, K., Jang, B.G. & McKenna, M.C. (2014). Motivation Terminology in Reading Research: A Conceptual Review - *Educational Psychology Review*, 26, 127–164.
- De Naeghel, J. & Van Keer, H. (2013). The Relation of Student and Class-Level Characteristics to Primary School Students' Autonomous Reading Motivation: A Multi-Level Approach. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 36, (4), 351–370.
- De Naeghel, J., Van Keer, H., Vansteenkiste, M. & Rosseel, Y. (2012). The Relation Between Elementary Students' Recreational and Academic Reading Motivation, Reading Frequency, Engagement, and Comprehension: A Self-Determination Theory Perspective. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 104, (4), 1006–1021.
- Demirci, H. & Gobert, M. (2015). Motivating Reluctant Readers. In P. McLaren, et al. (Eds.), (pp. 8-15), *Proceedings of the 20th TESOL Arabia Conference, Methods and Means in ELT*. Dubai, United Arab Emirates: TESOL Arabia.
- Elliot, A.J. (2005). *A Conceptual History of the Achievement Goal Construct*. In A.J. Elliot & C.S. Dweck (Eds.), *Handbook of competence and motivation* (pp. 52–72). New York, NY: Guilford.
- Gambrell, L.B. (2011). Seven Rules of Engagement - Why Is It So Important for Teachers. *The Reading Teacher*, 65, (3), 172–178.
- Irvin, J.L., Meltzed, J. & Dukes, M.S. (2007). *Taking Action on Adolescent Literacy: An Implementation Guide for School*, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), Alexandria, VA, USA.
- Khoury, S. & Duzgun, S. (2009). *Reading Habits of Young Emirati Women from the East Coast*. In D. Anderson & P. Barr (eds), *Cultivating Real Readers*, pp. 25-33. Abu Dhabi, UAE: HCT Press.
- National Education Association Read Across America, <http://www.nea.org/grants/886.htm> (accessed 29-05-2018).

- National Literacy Strategy, The Official Portal of the UAE Government, <https://government.ae/en/about-the-uae/strategies-initiatives-and-awards/federal-governments-strategies-and-plans/national-literacy-strategy> (accessed 29-05-2018).
- National Literacy Trust – Read On Get On, <https://literacytrust.org.uk/policy-and-campaigns/read-on-get-on/> (accessed 29-05-2018).
- National Reading Campaign website, <http://nationalreadingcampaign.ca/> (accessed 29-05-2018).
- Malloy, J., Marinak, B. & Gambrell L.B. (Eds.). (2010). *Essential Readings on Motivation*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Martin, J. D., Martins, R.J. & Naqvi, S.S. (2017). Do Arabs Really Read Less? "Cultural Tools" and "More Knowledgeable Others" as Determinants of Book Reliance in Six Arab Countries. *International Journal of Communication*, *11*, 3374-3393.
- MBRF. Arab Reading Challenge, Sponsored by Mohamed bin Rashed - Project Launching, <http://www.arabreadingchallenge.com/en/project-launching> (accessed 29-05-2018).
- MBRF & UNDP (2016). The Arab Reading Index (ARI) Report (2016) by The Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation (MBRF) and the United Nations Development Programme / Regional Bureau for Arab States (UNDP/RBAS). <http://knowledge4all.com/en/96/Pages/Download-the-AKI-2016>
- NextPage (2007a). *What Arabs Read: A Pan-Arab Survey on Readership: Phase 1: Egypt, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and Morocco*. Paris, France: Synovate.
- NextPage (2007b). *What Arabs Read: A Pan-Arab Survey on Readership: Phase 2: Algeria, Jordan, Palestine, and Syria*. Paris, France: Synovate.
- O’Sullivan, A. (2004). Reading and Arab college students: Issues in the United Arab Emirates Higher Colleges of Technology. In Proceedings of *the First International Online Conference on Second and Foreign Language Teaching and Research: Beyond Borders*. Symposium conducted at *First International Online Conference on Second and Foreign Language Teaching and Research*.
- Rajab, H. & Al-Sadi, A. (2015), An Empirical Study of Reading Habits and Interests of Saudi University EFL Learners. *International Journal of Linguistics*, *7*, (2).
- Schiefele, U. & Schaffner, E. (2016). Factorial and Construct Validity of a New Instrument for the Assessment of Reading Motivation. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *51*, (2), 221–237.
- Schutte, N.S. & Malouff, J.M. (2007) Dimensions of Reading Motivation: Development of an Adult Reading Motivation Scale, *Reading Psychology*, *28*, (5), 469-489.
- UNESCO. World Book and Copyright Day 23 April, <http://www.un.org/en/events/bookday/> (accessed 29-05-2018).
- UNDP (2016). Arab Human Development Report - Youth and the Prospects for Human Development in a Changing Reality.
- Wigfield, A. & Guthrie, J.T. (1997). Relations of Children’s Motivation for Reading to the Amount and Breadth of their Reading. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *89*, 420-432.
- Wischenbart, R. (2011). Reading Habits in the United Arab Emirates - A survey conducted among attendants of the Sharjah International Book Fair in November 2011. www.wischenbart.com.