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Comparative Analysis of Influence of Gender on Reading Interest of In-service and Pre-service Teachers

Dr. (Mrs.) Prabha Vig

Associate Professor

Dept. of Lifelong Learning & Extension

Panjab University, Chandigarh (India)

&

Komal Sharma

Ph.D. Research Scholar

Panjab University, Chandigarh (India)

Abstract:

This study is based on the assumption that teachers' teaching and learning is highly influenced and affected by gender. That is why, differences between male and female teachers are observed. The present study aims to investigate the construct of indicators associated to reading interest of in-service and pre-service teachers, then to explore the degree of variation between in-service and pre-service teachers about reading interest. The questionnaire was prepared by the researchers themselves on reading interest. 300 in-service and 300 pre-service teachers working and studying in different colleges of education of Punjab participated in the current study. As a result of research, a meaningful differentiation was observed that male in-service teachers scored significantly high on the perceived indicators of reading interest viz; prior knowledge, novelty, selectivity and sequence order as compared to female in-service teachers. It was seen that females exhibit significantly high on the indicators; suitability and fluency in reading. In contrast, the findings of pre-service teachers reflected that insignificant relationship evoked on all the indicators of reading interest on the basis of gender.

Keywords: fluency in reading, gender, in-service teachers, novelty, pre-service teachers, prior knowledge, reading interest, selectivity, sequence order and suitability

1.1 Introduction

There has been a great amount of literature indicating that reading interest has a significant influence on professionals and students. [Schank(1979); Asher(1979,1980); Kintsch(1980); Anderson(1982); Renninger and Wozniak(1985); Wineburg (1991); Krashen(1993); Panigrahi and Panda (1996); Goldman (1997); Cottrell (1999); McDaniel, Waddill, Finstad, Bourg (2000); Eyre (2005); Mokatsi (2005)]. The above researchers found that reading interest effect the performance of an individual by affecting knowledge and structures and thus increasing the power to recall main ideas and higher degree of cognitive ability. On the other hand, researchers like; [Biancarosa and Snow (2006); Kamil, Borman, Dole, Kral, Salinger and Torgesen (2008); Willingham (2009); Ebbers (2011); Schroeder (2013)] reported the fact that reading interest act as a motivation for teachers to improve their quality and efficiency in the process of teaching and learning. Their studies further concluded that, reading interest act as a jumpstart for the struggling readers- in any subject area but when one become interested, he/she gradually turns to be attentive and focused. This focused attention becomes a strategy for yielding a qualitative depth which is followed when one read with an interest. According to Nespor (1987); reading

interest is closely related to one's concepts, views, attitudes toward learning and conceptions of teachers' role in teaching practices. This in turn, improves their professional preparation and teaching effectiveness. Based on these findings, Kane, Sandretto and Heath (2002) expanded their views and proposed that teaching at higher level is incomplete without examining teachers' beliefs, attitudes about reading theories and strategies.

Keeping this in mind, the present study was planned to investigate the construct of reading interest among pre-service and in-service teachers studying and working in different colleges of education, Punjab to explore how gender as an independent variable influence the beliefs and attitudes associated to their reading interest. Going through the research work conducted by the above said researchers, different indicators of reading interest were viewed and research that how reading interest occur among teachers as; pre-service and in-service. Going by the collected reviews, it was perceived that reading interest among teachers can be determined by knowing their opinions on the basis of indicators such as; suitability, prior knowledge, novelty, selectivity, sequence order and fluency in reading.

1.2 Rationale of the Study

Teachers are the key factors of the teaching-learning process and are at the forefront to reform and update themselves, so as to become better transmitters of knowledge by setting new challenges via updating and acquiring competencies. To undertake new challenges as a result of rapid development of educational technologies, socio-economic growth and modernization demand innovativeness, creation, dissemination and application of new knowledge. Going by the above challenges, Askar (1992) suggested that to cope up with this explosion of knowledge teachers require training which will help them to adapt to 21st century information. He further stressed that to assess and contribute information effectively teachers have to establish a link with reading and its quality which can be attained by reading interest. Thus, the teachers of present scenario comprises 'teachers as students' and 'teachers themselves'; who can develop the characteristics which can help them to cope up with these growing and changing demands of education. Here, reading interest as a supportive measure can help the teachers, whether pre-service or in-service. According to National Reading Panel (2000); with reading interest one can lead towards reading development and then slowly and gradually develop the literacy attitude. This means reading interest as a motivational force helps the individual to learn and improve his knowledge according to one's requirements and needs. The very same views were opinioned by Drejer and Printz (2006) who reflected that in togetherness reading interest influence lifelong learning and continuing education.

Further, owing to the cumulative nature of learning and teaching a teacher has to make continuous inputs by reading but this process can be redeemed effectively if the relationship between reading and interest is positive and significant. Taking this in account, the present study was planned to study the reading interest of pre-service and in-service teachers where gender is taken as an independent variable and reading interest as a dependent variable.

In addition to this, the undertaken study will trigger the involvement of teachers whether; in-service and pre-service by involving themselves with reading according to the indicators assumed for the present study. Further, this process will extend their excellence in assuming and performing the role of teacher, so that they become significant influencers or changers of society.

Besides this, one of the main aims of investigation was to measure the comparison between in-service and pre-service teachers on account of indicators of reading interest viz; suitability, prior knowledge, novelty, selectivity, sequence order and fluency in reading.

1.3. Definitions of the Terms Used in the Study

1.3. a. Gender

This refers to the characteristics commonly associated with males or females.

According to Sadkar and Sadkar (1995); gender is biological male and female. Gender is socially constructed. They further highlighted that boys and girls are generally educated side by side in school but their experiences are profoundly different.

According to Rogers (2006); gender is a key element in the discourse of learning. This is because women have responsibilities and connections to the homes.

McGeown, Goodwin and Henderson and Wright (2012) noted the fact that the concept of sex and gender are often used interchangeably, though sex refers to biological differences between boys and girls.

1.3. b. Reading Interest

Panigrahi and Panda (1996) interpreted reading interest as a way towards creative and pragmatic education which involves the habit of personal investigation, self-study and self-analysis.

Renninger (1998) considered reading interest as a personal variable which means a characteristic in an individual, which takes time to develop, but it become stable with passage of time towards a certain topic or domain and is influenced by degree of knowledge, values and positive feelings.

Ainley, Hidi and Berndorff (2002) characterized interest as a strong influence on learning. They further strengthened their views by emphasizing that individuals display more persistence, engagement, and positive affect toward tasks that they are interested in.

Hidi (2006) defined reading interest as a unique motivational variable, as well as a psychological state that occurs during interactions between persons and their objects of interest and is characterized by increased attention, concentration and affect. He further related interest as a motivational variable which not only involves emotions but also the intellect and thus acting as a powerful energizers.

1.3. c. In-Service Teachers

They are the teachers working in the educational institutes. They are operational and are actually performing their role as a teacher.

Duffy and Anderson's (1982) examined in-service teachers as practicing teachers' whose responses and inconsistencies have been influenced by their actual experiences in the classroom.

According to Forest Group (1994); the in-service teachers have mastered the art of adaptation and they adapt it to the maximum to achieve his or her literate potential.

According to Yours' Dictionary (2012); in-service teachers are those teachers who are full time employees.

Free Online Dictionary referred in-service teachers as being a full-time employee.

1.3. d. Pre-Service Teachers

They are referred as would be teachers pursuing professional courses under teacher education programs. Their process of professional career ends at point of entry into teaching profession. They are the students admitted to a teacher education program at a university/college who has not completed internship.

Friere (2002) suggested that pre-service teachers can enhance their global knowledge and increase their awareness of the importance of serving their own future classroom. This led us to conclude the fact that pre-service teachers with more awareness and empowerment can inspire students when they join teaching as a profession.

Boyle-Baise (2005) considered pre-service teachers as teachers who often live in a bubble because they just go to school and plan to leave. As a result, they are often completely alienated from the local communities that surround their college towns.

1.4 Indicators Determining Reading Interest

1.4. a. Suitability

Reading must be in accordance to the level of understanding of students and teachers. It largely depends on; easiness to apply, usefulness, readability and experience. Further, it acts as an effective strategy to focus attention on ideas and details.

Chavez (2001) pointed that male students tend to be more analytic while on the other hand, females tend to be more global while approaching learning quality. Their studies further highlighted that while learning males stick more to novels and on the other hand females show adherence to cultural differences.

Smith and Wilhelm (2002) conducted research studies on gender differences related to learning. Their studies revealed that boys read less than girls and they further highlighted that boys tend to be better at information retrievals and work-related literacy task than girls are. Their studies further inferred that boys have much less interest in leisure reading than girls and far more likely to read for utilitarian purposes than girls.

Haupt (2003) opined that men want to read information that will help them in their profession such as; newspapers, manuals and other nonfiction texts, but these reading materials do not provide exposure to the “language rich” environment of novels that females read.

Chen (2008) investigated on reading habits of college students in Taiwan. The findings of the study highlighted that females are more likely to be avid readers than males. The study further perceived that reason attributed to male not performing well in reading as compared to their female counterparts is due to lack of reading literature.

Shaw (2008) examined on the reading and writing self-efficacy beliefs of students and identified females as weak readers.

1.4 . b. Prior Knowledge

It helps the learner to comprehend and learn the text, draw connections between student knowledge, reading and support and promote student thinking about the text. This means prior knowledge familiarizes the reader to a text topic and rely on that knowledge what they know and recognize it.

Goldman (1997) promoted prior knowledge as a goal of reading which help students to ‘comprehend’ and learn text, draw connections between student knowledge, reading and support

and promote student thinking about text. He further pinpointed that each of these learning goals requires proper connection of ideas in the texts to what they already know.

Hattie (2003) examined attributes that enhance the success levels of the individuals. His study revealed that it is a multi-faceted approach and teachers' who are equipped with prior knowledge skills and attitudes can really make a difference.

Lenski, Crumpler, Stallworth and Crawford (2005) summarized their study that reading interests among pre-service teachers helps to explore and learn. They further referred that it is only with this interest one integrate one's viewpoints into an excited mode and explore it to learn more. They further stressed that with prior knowledge one his/her own expertise and change his/her views and thinking according to the possibilities of the doing room.

Johnson (2009) opined that when a teacher learns something already learnt. But its usage depend largely on the sum of his prior experiences, the socio-cultural context in which the learning takes place and their desire to learn or expected to do with that knowledge. This solely depends upon teachers' knowledge acquirements and his applications in the classroom based on the knowledge of self, settings, students curriculum and community.

Schroeder (2013) conducted a research study on 34 college students to examine the relationship between prior knowledge and reading interest. The results of the study revealed that the relationship between prior knowledge was curvilinear but varied. The researcher concluded the fact that people found accessible materials more interesting than inaccessible. Therefore, interest does not become a significant indicator of performance on recall or recognition tasks when prior knowledge was controlled.

1.4 . c. Novelty

Novelty in reading means surprising, unusual, different and new information. It is with novelty, reading is conceived as a creative activity sharpened by readers' expectations and experiences.

Merriam (1998) conducted research on 64 male pre-service teachers' classroom observation. Her study summarized that with phenomenon of reading interest, they can yield the information which is rich by nature. The study further highlighted with interest in reading teachers' can take up different types of challenges and employ various type of strategies. All this refers their trust worthiness and in depth insight to take up the challenges in the current job.

Tracy and Lane (1999) conducted a research study to determine gender equitable teaching behaviors to identify the level of awareness among male and female pre-service teachers. The findings of the study revealed that gender equitable behaviors engage the teachers in such a way that they get more exposed to information so gradually, their level of awareness increased.

Sadoski, Goetz and Rodriguez (2000) highlighted that learners are more able to extract knowledge/ information from interesting texts as compared to boring texts.

Schraw, Flowerday and Lehman (2001) recognized reading interest among teachers as spontaneous situational interest which can be provided by something unusual different and new.

Applegate and Applegate (2004) referred ideal readers as engaged readers or avid readers. They are the ones who read regularly and enthusiastically for their own purposes. Avid readers tend to

be different from nonreaders on a variety of cognitive skills, behavioral habits and background variables.

Sullivan (2004) opined that male adolescents want to read what is real to them such as; material related to sports and adventure, find out how things work. That is why they tend to gravitate to more informational texts which identify their role models and do not read as many books as women.

Moje, Overby, Tysvaer, and Morris (2008) found that reading interest among teachers promotes academic success by providing more reading practice which leads to increase vocabulary, understanding and motivation to read more.

Grierson (2011) conducted a research study on teachers and concluded the suggestions of his study as; if teacher wants to increase the students interest, they can use creative material that possess qualities of situational interest (novelty, danger) in order to increase interest in topic of lesson material.

1.4. d. Selectivity

It is an approach towards availability of various sources of information and that too in terms of frequency.

Panigrahi and Panda (1996) introduced selectivity as an approach to various sources of information in the form of documents, newspapers, text-books, magazines, storybooks, journals, novels etc.

Johnston, Mckcown and McEwen (1998) conducted a research study on pre-service teachers and highlighted that female pre-service teachers tended to seek intrinsic rewards such as mental stimulation while reading with interest. They further referred this result because of the reason that teaching is viewed as female occupation and females are more satisfied in teaching so they facilitate student learning and their quality in learning with intrinsic reading interest. On the other hand, male have extrinsic sciences to teach and read which refers reading to an activity as a means to an end, such as outperforming others.

Tercanlioglu (2001) conducted a research study on pre-service teachers as readers and future teachers of EFL reading and found that pre-service teachers did not prescribe themselves as very competent readers, but when they read, they have intrinsic reasons to do so.

According to Doiron (2003); it is interesting to note that the reading selections of males are more evenly distributed with equal halves fiction and informational, whereas females are more likely to just choose fiction, suggesting a balance is also needed for females in encouraging them to read more informational books

Applegate and Applegate(2004), Nathanson, Pruslow and Levitts (2008) conducted research studies among in-service and prospective teachers and conclude that many pre-service teachers are not avid readers themselves and this lack of reading interest and engagement may be passed on to students. They further found that disinterest in personal reading means that they do not exhibit investment in personal reading.

Oakhill and Petrides (2007) highlighted that boys assess only those books in which they are interested in reading. This means boys assess only those books / reading material which interest them.

Ebbers (2011) conducted a research study on reading interest and found that reading interest is affected by motivational variables such as choice, discussions and enjoyment. He further added that reading interest is varied by age, gender and subject areas.

McGeown (2012) examined sex differences in reading motivation. The results of the study revealed that girls reported significantly higher level of reading interest in curiosity and involvement but not in challenge. On the other hand, boys significantly read more male oriented books as compared to females who read female oriented books.

Mishra and Yadav (2012) conducted research study on male and female pre-service teachers and found that female teachers are comparatively better than male on the dimension of aesthetic, own idea, job related own idea.

1.4. e. Sequence Order

It is a way that make easy for the readers to understand and master the facts and engage him to think according to his knowledge.

Chavez (2000) stressed that a male teacher is faster paced and give much time to topic shifts whereas, female teachers were communicative facilitators and perhaps more tolerant of first language use. He further highlighted that female teachers were too forceful in choosing topics and asking too many questions primarily with the intent to smooth and perpetuate the conversational flow.

Borich (2003) stated the fact that for teachers there is not only one right way to teach rather many characteristics in order to be an effective reading teacher.

Scholastic and Yankelovich (2008) conducted a research study on reading in the 21st century: turning the page with technology. The findings of the study revealed the fact that girls prefer to read from books as a source for their reading whereas boys as low frequency readers prefer to read online. The study further revealed that on the basis of gender, thus time spent on reading was also very much diversified.

1.4. f. Fluency In Reading

It is the way to understand one's own experiences in a better way. Further, it provides an exciting voyage to self-discovery.

Tracy and Lane (1999) conducted a research study on Preservice teachers and found that suitability; selectivity and fluency in reading depends of pre-service teachers largely on age, gender attitudes towards prior art and experiences and beliefs about their personal artistic proclivities. The study further revealed that gender plays a significant variation between the Preservice teachers. The study further revealed that the women are less definite about their reading beliefs as compared to men.

Barr (2001) revealed fluency in reading as qualitative engagement of the teacher because reading when combined with interest becomes a constructive activity.

Hansen, Invernizzi, Everton (2002) while discussing on trends, issues and controversy revealed the fact that reading materials achieve an effective balance of reading, writing and word study instruction when they meet diverse needs of the students and empower them according to their level of interest and learning.

Chen (2008) investigated female college students and found that females did not read more than males in this level of age group. The study further revealed that as men grew into older adults, they tended to read more than women. His study further revealed that the reading habits of both male and female depends largely upon the literacy environment. For this, literacy-rich classrooms and school libraries are very important for both males and females as they help the readers to encounter the books.

Kirby, Ball and Kelly (2011) found that inconsistent and weak effects of reading interest influence the reading ability of the students particularly in the elementary years. The study further referred that lower the level of reading interest, inconsistent and weak is the reading ability.

1.5 Review Related to Reading Interest with Respect to Gender

Raudenbush, Rowan and Cheong (1992) conducted research on pre-service teachers and found that females are better readers than males.

Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) focused on elementary school students and professed that differences can be observed by favoring girls on two dimensions of reading; reading interest and motivation and attitudes towards reading. They further found that intrinsic factors like; interest and curiosity is closely associated with reading because girls typically possess high reading motivation/ interest as compared to boys.

Gilbert (1998) supported significant differences in gender associated to general levels of topic interest.

Johnston, Mckcown and McEwen (1998) studied pre-service teachers and highlighted that female pre-service teachers tended to seek intrinsic rewards such as mental stimulation while reading with interest. They further referred that females viewed teaching as an occupation which is more satisfying to them than any other occupation. On the other hand, male have extrinsic sciences to teach and read which refers reading as an activity as a means to an end, such as outperforming others by making an input with reading.

Hall and Coles (1999) visualized that girls perceive themselves to be better readers than boys.

OECD (2001) conducted research study at Finland to determine disparity in reading because of gender. The results of the study revealed that male readers tend to be functional whereas females read for pleasure.

Ainley, Hillman, Hidi (2002) explored reading interest of senior secondary students and revealed that gender was the factor most closely associated with topic interest, text titles etc. They considered that they serve as important situational triggers. They further suggested that when topic interest, affective responses and persistence operated together they yield higher topic interest. On the other hand, lower interest texts are influenced by gender because of persistence.

Smith and Wilhelm (2002) supported that gender differences are related to learning. Their studies findings revealed that boys read less than girls and tend to be better at information retrievals and work-related literacy task than girls. They further inferred that boys have much less interest in leisure reading than girls and far more likely to read for utilitarian purposes.

Topping, Samuels and Paul (2006) conducted research on 45,670 pupils to explore the difference in reading between genders. Their study revealed that boys appeared to read less than girls especially in higher grades.

Scholastic and Yankelovich (2008) revealed that on the basis of gender, time spent on reading with interest is very much diversified.

Shaw (2008) clarified females as weak readers because of their low self-efficacy in reading.

Vysal (2008) worked on science teachers and found that females work harder than males to prove themselves at work

PISA (2009) reported gender identity as a barrier in reading and concluded that boys do not find reading material that interests them.

Alkhalwaldeh (2011) investigated on 500 secondary students at Amman and revealed that differences exist between male and female students on the basis of reading interest.

Logan and Medford (2011) found that sex differences existed in the strength of association between levels of reading interest, reading motivation and reading attainment.

McGeown (2012) examined sex differences in reading motivation. The results of the study revealed that girls reported significantly higher level of reading interest in curiosity and involvement but not in challenge and on the other hand, boys significantly read more male oriented books as compared to females who read female oriented books.

Gursoy (2013) conducted research on 200 teacher trainees in Turkey and found statistically significant differences between males and females in speaking and reading comprehension for daily language, as well as reading comprehension for academic language.

1.6 Objective of the Study

To examine the influence of gender on reading interest by including gender as a factor in all of the indicators of reading interest viz; suitability, prior knowledge, novelty, selectivity, sequence order and fluency in reading.

1.7 Sample of the Study

In-service and pre-service teachers of colleges of education at Punjab (India) were taken as the universe of the research. Total 300 in-service teachers (n=140 males, n=160 females) working in various colleges of education of Punjab (India) and 300 pre-service teachers (n=150 males, n=150 females) studying from co-educational colleges of education, Punjab (India) were identified as sample.

1.8 Data Collecting Tools

A self made reading interest scale was developed by the researchers which consisted of 30 questions under various indicators viz; suitability, prior knowledge, novelty, selectivity, sequence order and fluency in reading. The responses on the measurement tool were collected on a 5- level Likert type scale ranging from 1- (St. Disagree) to 5- (St. Agree). Reliability coefficient of the scale was 0.891. Content and face validity was also established.

1.9 Results

The examination of data collected through questionnaire on 5-point Likert scale gave feedback of teachers on statements related to indicators which they endure most and least. The mean, standard deviation, t-values and level of significance were obtained for different indicators of reading interest and are presented in table-1.

Table- 1

(Gender-wise) t- ratio of Reading Interest

INDICATOR	STATUS	N	MEAN	Std. Deviation	t-value	Sig.
Suitability	Females	300	16.19	5.289	-2.658*	.008/ SD
	Males	300	15.22	4.098		
Prior Knowledge	Females	300	13.77	5.171	-4.590*	.000/ SD
	Males	300	15.80	5.635		
Novelty	Females	300	14.34	5.454	-4.757*	.000/SD
	Males	300	16.30	4.620		
Selectivity	Females	300	14.80	5.349	-5.910*	.000/SD
	Males	300	17.37	5.303		
Sequence Order	Females	300	14.05	4.957	-3.799*	.000/SD
	Males	300	15.68	5.537		
Fluency in Reading	Females	300	16.24	5.191	-2.892*	.004/SD
	Males	300	15.50	5.504		

* Significant at 0.01 Level of Confidence

1.6. a. Suitability and Gender

In order to test significant differences with suitability t-test was used. Females gave significantly higher reading interest ratings (M=16.19) to suitability as compared to males (M=15.22). Significant gender differences were observed in the scores of males and females on suitability indicator of reading interest at the 0.01 level of significance.

1.6. b. Prior Knowledge and Gender

Males signify higher reading interest ratings (M=15.80) to prior knowledge as compared to females (M=13.77). Significant gender differences were observed on the indicators prior knowledge in reading interest at the 0.01 level of significance and males scored higher than females.

1.6. c. Novelty and Gender

Males gave significantly higher reading interest ratings (M=16.30) on novelty as compared to females (M=14.34) and there exists significant gender differences on 0.01 level of significance.

1.6. d. Selectivity and Gender

Males gave significantly higher reading interest ratings (M=17.37) to selectivity as compared to females (M=14.80) and there exists a significant difference between males and females at 0.01 level of significance.

1.6. e. Sequence Order and Gender

In order to test significant differences with sequence order t-test was used. Males gave significantly higher reading interest ratings (M= 15.68) to sequence order as compared to females (M=14.05) and on the basis of gender there exists a significant difference with respect to gender.

1.6 f. Fluency in Reading and Gender

Females gave significantly higher reading interest ratings (M=16.24) to fluency in reading as compared to their males counterparts (M=15.50). In order to test significant differences with respect to gender on the indicator fluency in reading t-test was used and there exists a significant difference.

1.7 Conclusion

The above analysis implied that male in-service teachers have the highest scores on the indicators; suitability, prior knowledge, novelty, selectivity and sequence order as compared to their female counterparts. This implies that male in service teachers are confident what they capture to read effectively with interest. On the other hand, female in-service teachers scored significantly high on the indicator fluency in reading as compared to males. This signifies that females view their occupation as professional and more satisfied in teaching and read that material with interest which can affect their profession and facilitate student teaching learning process (Raudenbush, Rowan and Cheong; 1992).

On the other hand, it was observed that the mean ratings and standard deviations do not deviate on the basis of gender significantly. This means that 21st century has threatened both males and females to adapt themselves in accordance to the present scenario and update themselves in knowledge and awareness by interest in reading.

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