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Academic and Recreational Reading Attitudes Among Primary Students in a Rural Malaysian Village

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Abstract

Reading is crucial for development and educational outcomes, yet access to literacy resources and supportive environments is uneven, particularly in rural and low-income areas. Positive reading attitudes are linked to better reading achievement, but research on these attitudes among ESL speakers in non-Western, rural contexts remains limited. This study explores the attitudes of 4th and 5th graders towards recreational and academic reading in a rural Malaysian village, assessing students who participated in a reading program. Utilizing the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey, data were gathered from 74 of the 120 participants, achieving a 62% response rate. Analysis through Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) revealed a nuanced relationship between children's reading attitudes and their engagement with various reading contexts and activities. Findings underscore a

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pronounced preference for recreational over academic reading, with both types of reading attitudes significantly interrelated. This suggests the program's environment and involvement of reading partners may significantly shape children's reading perceptions. Moreover, the study highlights the pivotal role of the reading context, indicating a direct correlation between children's positive perception of their reading environment and their engagement levels. While the study did not delve into the impact of socio-economic status on program effectiveness, it signals the need for further research across diverse cultural settings to fully understand the efficacy of reading programs. The research concludes that after-school reading initiatives are instrumental in enhancing children's academic and recreational reading attitudes, providing valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers focused on literacy development.

Keywords: Elementary reading, ESL reading attitudes, primary education, reading motivation, literacy development.

1. INTRODUCTION

Reading is a fundamental skill that plays a pivotal role in shaping children's cognitive and language development across the globe, influencing educational outcomes from early childhood through adulthood (Saracho, 2017). It was discovered that people with a collection of more books reported greater levels of positive psychological well-being than those with a smaller number of books, indicating more enjoyment (Yulia et al., 2021). Access to literacy resources and a positive reading environment are essential for fostering children's reading skills and attitudes. The International Literacy Association ("2020 what's hot in literacy report", 2020) emphasizes the role of supportive communities worldwide in fostering positive reading attitudes, disparities in literacy resources, and reading culture remain a challenge, especially in rural and low-income areas.

The significance of reading attitudes has been widely acknowledged in literacy research. Studies have consistently demonstrated a positive correlation between a favorable attitude toward reading and reading achievement, particularly among elementary school children (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; McKenna et al., 1995; Nootens et al., 2019; Petscher, 2010). Moreover, a positive reading attitude can increase the likelihood of children engaging in reading for pleasure, which can subsequently enhance literacy skills, vocabulary development, and academic performance (Hemphill & Hemphill, 2021).

Despite the abundance of literature on reading attitudes (e.g., Baker & Wigfield, 1999; McKenna et al., 1995; Nootens et al., 2019), much of the existing research has been localized, primarily focusing on native English-speaking populations in the United States. This creates a significant research gap in understanding reading attitudes among English as a second language (ESL) speakers, particularly in non-Western countries where English serves a critical role in education and professional development. In Malaysia, for example, English is a widely spoken second language, yet there is a stark contrast in reading habits and accessibility to English literature

between urban and rural communities. This discrepancy is especially pronounced in rural areas, like fishing villages, where children's exposure to English reading materials is limited, potentially fostering negative attitudes toward reading in English and hindering their reading development. The study by [Zulkefly and Razali \(2019\)](#) provides valuable insights into Malaysian rural secondary school students' attitudes towards learning English as a second language. This study explores the attitudes of students in rural areas, shedding light on the challenges and perceptions of learning English in these communities. The findings of this study offer valuable insights into the attitudes of rural students towards English, which is crucial in understanding the potential barriers to developing positive attitudes towards reading in English. On the other hand, [Mohd-Asraf and Abdullah \(2016\)](#) investigated the English reading attitudes of students in the Klang Valley area (i.e., the urban area of Malaysia). Significant contrasts can be traced between the two studies. Malaysian students in rural areas and urban settings differed in their language competence of English as a second language, reading habits, and reading achievement levels.

Furthermore, reading is essential for academic success, with children's reading development beginning in early childhood and continuing into young adulthood ([Saracho, 2017](#)). Often, reading instruction in schools focuses on cognitive components such as phonological awareness, word reading, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and fluency. However, affective factors like attitudes toward reading and interest in reading are sometimes overlooked. [Aaron et al. \(2008\)](#) suggested that children's literacy development is supported by cognitive, environmental, and psychological factors, emphasizing the importance of the roles played by families, educators, and communities in fostering children's reading habits.

Moreover, the global decline in reading interest, highlighted by a UNESCO Institute for Statistics ([Huebler & Lu, 2013](#)), stating that only 3% of Malaysians engage in book reading, mirrors a worldwide trend where traditional reading competes with digital media consumption. Addressing this challenge requires innovative approaches like the Reading Bus Program, which seeks to revitalize reading interest among children in underprivileged areas by making reading activities engaging and accessible. This study, however, focuses on students' reading attitudes, with potential implications for literacy promotion strategies worldwide.

More specifically, this study aims to fill a gap in the existing literature by exploring the perspectives of primary school children towards academic and recreational reading within a specific context, that is a rural fishing village in West Malaysia. Specifically, the study is driven by three specific objectives:

- 1) to identify specific attitudes of the primary school children towards both academic and recreational reading of English books;
- 2) to investigate the relationships between these attitudes; and
- 3) to examine how the key factors influence each type of reading attitude.

In enriching our understanding of reading attitudes among ESL speakers in a rural Malaysian context, this study contributes to the global discourse on literacy, offering valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers engaged in fostering reading engagement across diverse cultural and linguistic landscapes.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review critically examines how children's attitudes toward reading, both academic and recreational, are shaped by various factors. It focuses on the nuances of reading attitudes, including their measurement, influencing factors, and their impact on reading achievement, with a particular emphasis on English as a second language (ESL) contexts. The review identifies existing gaps in research, especially regarding ESL learners in non-Western settings, and underscores the need for this investigation into the reading attitudes of children in a rural village in West Malaysia.

2.1 Attitudes toward Reading

Children's attitude toward reading plays a crucial role in shaping their reading mastery. According to the McKenna Model (McKenna et al., 1995), an individual's reading perspective is a multidimensional construct that can develop over time as a result of their beliefs about the outcomes of reading and their reading experiences. These beliefs are shaped by the perceived value of reading in comparison to other leisure activities, such as playing games and watching TV. Therefore, it is crucial to provide children with access to a variety of reading materials and create a reading-rich environment that encourages children to explore different genres and topics of interest.

Attitude towards reading can vary based on the purpose of reading. According to McKenna et al. (2012), reading can have two distinct purposes: academic and recreational. Academic reading refers to reading assigned by teachers in a school setting, while recreational reading involves a reader choosing when and what to read at their own discretion (Conradi et al., 2013; McKenna et al., 2012).

With regard to reading attitudes, studies have shown that there is a gradual decline in positive reading attitudes among young people in primary school. For instance, Nootens et al. (2019) administered a reading attitude questionnaire to 469 students in grades 4 and 8 in Canada and found that attitudes towards reading remained relatively constant across the final two years of elementary school, as well as the first two years of middle school. However, the transition from one education level to the next was found to have a significant impact on attitudes towards reading, with the latter being less favorable.

The importance of book ownership in fostering positive attitudes towards reading among young people has been underscored by studies such as those conducted by McKenna et al. (1995) and Mol and Bus (2011), which demonstrate a significant correlation between access to books at home and children's enthusiasm for reading. These findings suggest that encouraging book ownership can play a crucial role in enhancing children's reading abilities and overall academic success.

2.2 Recreational and Academic Reading

Recreational reading, also known as leisure or pleasure reading, is a self-selected activity driven by personal interests and enjoyment, contrasting with academic reading's structured nature. It is vital for literacy development, associated with higher motivation, reading fluency, and comprehension skills. This type of reading cultivates positive attitudes towards reading and can lead to improved academic performance over time, due to the intrinsic motivation it generates, underscoring its importance in

cultivating lifelong reading habits and contributing to overall academic success and well-being (De Naeghel et al., 2012; McKenna et al., 2012).

Academic reading is, nevertheless, characterized by its purpose-driven nature, focusing on knowledge acquisition, concept understanding, and curriculum requirements. While essential for educational advancement, its obligatory aspect may dampen student engagement, especially when misaligned with their interests. However, aligning academic reading tasks with student interests and allowing for choice can mitigate these challenges and enhance engagement, highlighting the need for a balanced approach that considers student preferences (Gambrell, 2011).

The differentiation between recreational and academic reading underscores the significance of both in literacy development. Recent studies advocate for educational practices that merge the motivational aspects of recreational reading with academic tasks, suggesting that incorporating choice, relevance, and interest into academic reading can foster more positive attitudes and enhance engagement. Such integration not only supports literacy development but also helps students perceive the relevance of academic reading to their personal interests, thereby boosting their motivation and engagement across reading activities (Guthrie et al., 2007; Unrau & Schlackman, 2006). Importantly, leveraging the motivational elements of recreational reading within academic contexts can help educators create a supportive and engaging reading environment, promoting a positive reading culture across all forms of reading.

2.3 Factors Shaping Children's Reading Attitude

Children's attitude toward reading is a prerequisite for stimulating the time spent reading and reading achievement (Alexander & Cobb, 1992; Burns et al., 1999), claiming its essential role in the chain of the reading process. However, reading research has focused mainly on the cognitive domain of reading, leaving attitudes under-explored. More recently, research on literacy has highlighted the impact of affective factors on reading (Nootens et al., 2019). Below, we review the literature that shapes the body of knowledge for reading attitudes. Specifically, the discussion is clustered on the ecological factors, such as community support and the environment that positively stimulate reading activities.

According to Aaron et al. (2008), the ecological domain, in addition to the cognitive and psychological clusters, plays a significant role in building reading components. Within the ecological domains, factors such as the home environment, culture, and parental involvement have been reported to support reading among children (Molfese et al., 2002; Rothstein, 2004).

The home environment significantly influences children's reading attitudes and habits, ultimately impacting their reading skills and development. Evans et al. (2000) examined the relationship between the home environments of children and their language and literacy development, highlighting the influence of home literacy activities on early literacy skills. Similarly, Roberts et al. (2005) found that the overall responsiveness and support of the home environment significantly predicted children's language and early literacy skills, emphasizing the critical role of the home environment in children's language and emergent literacy skills. Dowd et al. (2017) emphasized the critical role of the enabling environment in children's reading development, further supporting the significance of the home environment in shaping reading habits and skills. Weigel et al. (2006) highlighted the importance of parental

literacy habits in exposing children to models of literacy within the home literacy environment, underscoring the influence of parental literacy behaviors on children's literacy development. Additionally, [Ho and Lau \(2018\)](#) identified early home literacy activities, parental attitudes towards reading, and the number of books at home as major factors affecting children's reading performance, further emphasizing the impact of the home literacy environment on children's reading abilities. Furthermore, [Buckingham et al. \(2013\)](#) suggested that parents play a central role in creating a home environment that either facilitates or hinders the development of children's early habits, including reading habits. A positive home environment can foster a love for reading, while a negative or unsupportive environment may inhibit the development of positive reading attitudes.

Culture significantly influences children's reading attitudes. Research indicates that cultural backgrounds differ in the emphasis they place on reading and the types of materials read, affecting children's attitudes towards reading. For instance, the study by [Heath \(1983\)](#) have shown that children from cultures with a strong tradition of reading and storytelling are more likely to develop positive reading attitudes. Conversely, in cultures where reading is not prioritized, children may be less inclined to view reading as an enjoyable activity ([Gregory et al., 2004](#)). These findings highlight the critical role of cultural values in fostering or hindering the development of a love for reading among children.

Parental involvement is another essential factor in the development of children's reading attitudes. When parents actively engage with their children in reading activities, such as reading aloud, discussing books, or visiting libraries, children are more likely to develop positive reading attitudes ([Neuman, 1999](#)). In contrast, children with parents who are not actively involved in their reading development may not receive the support and encouragement needed to foster a love of reading.

In low-income families, parents may not have the English proficiency to read in English or may not be accustomed to reading with their children. Most parents in some cultures rely on schooling for their children's literacy development. However, the children in our study may not be independent readers; hence, the role of reading partners (volunteers) is to assist the children with reading when parental involvement is lacking or absent. Thus, this study establishes that the environment or context of reading plays a crucial role in shaping reading attitudes among children.

2.4 Research Context: The Reading Bus Club

Children require motivation to read, which can stem from various sources such as school, family, friendships, and community. In underprivileged communities, family and community support for reading development may be limited due to a lack of resources to facilitate reading at home. Consequently, schools often become the primary learning environment. However, research indicates that children can develop better academic skills through out-of-school activities ([Eccles et al., 1998](#)). Students tend to prefer and excel in activities they value more, even if they are not school-related, and these activities can divert their focus and energy away from academics. This has been observed in second-language learning among Latino students ([McCarthy & Moje, 2002; Moje, 2000; Moje et al., 2001](#)).

Recognizing the potential of out-of-school activities to support learning, the Reading Bus Club was founded by a Malaysian couple, English teachers Celli

Nadarajan and Kong Lai Mei, who sought to help schools and families in underprivileged areas. Their vision was to create a space where every child could enjoy life through reading. They began by using a bus (initially a van) to deliver books and promote reading in underprivileged communities. Since its inception, the club has collaborated with various communities to implement the Reading Bus Program. More information about the Reading Bus Club can be found on the official Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/TheReadingBusClub/>

The primary objective of the Reading Bus Program is to foster a love for reading English books among children, which has dwindled with the increasing presence of gadgets and technology in their lives. The program aims to introduce underprivileged Malaysian children to the joy and importance of reading in English (Savita, 2019). Conducted at a school in a suburban area of Malaysia, the program offers students access to new English books displayed on child-friendly shelves in a designated corner of their classroom. The collection includes a series of books for emergent English readers, suitable for decoding and word recognition (Leathers, 2020). Pre-service English teachers volunteer as reading partners, assisting children in the English reading program.

3. METHODS

This study was conducted at a rural school in West Malaysia with the aim of examining the reading attitudes of children in the Reading Bus Program. The selection of only one school was due to the constrain in costs and volunteers; hence, only one school was selected to participate in the Reading Bus Program. We recruited 50 pre-service English as a second language (ESL) teachers from a nearby university as volunteers. Over three months, the students and volunteers met six times on Saturdays for half a day per meeting. They engaged in age-appropriate reading activities in designated classrooms, involving a total of 120 children. One example of reading activity is circle reading time, where six children and one volunteer sit in a circle, with another volunteer assisting from outside the circle. The children select a book as a group and read together. Prior to selecting the book, the children discussed and agreed to select a certain book in which they engaged in a shared reading activity.

To collect data, we administered the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS; McKenna & Kear, 1990), chosen for its child-friendly Garfield illustrations and easily quantifiable results. The ERAS consists of 20 items with a 4-point pictorial rating scale, divided into two 10-item subscales measuring recreational and academic (school-related) reading attitudes. Responses are scored from 1 to 4, with higher scores indicating more positive attitudes. Each subscale's total score can range from 10 to 40 points. ERAS is suitable for primary school children, with a Cronbach's alpha value of .87-.89 for the full scale (Davis et al., 2018). The ERAS developed by McKenna and Kear has demonstrated satisfactory reliability and structural validity in various studies. For instance, one study investigating ERAS scores among academically talented students attending an academic summer program found satisfactory internal consistency coefficients, supporting the reliability of the ERAS Academic and Recreational scores. Additionally, exploratory factor analysis of ERAS scores supported a two-factor model measuring academic and recreational reading attitudes, indicating good structural validity (Worrell et al., 2006). This suggests that the ERAS

is a reliable and valid instrument for assessing students' attitudes toward both academic and recreational reading. The nature of the survey administration and analysis in this study is in line with McKenna et al. (1995) and Nootens et al. (2019).

Of the 120 students who participated in this study, only 74 students participated in the complete research. The rest of the students were either absent on the day of the data collection or did not complete the survey for various reasons. The study encompassed a purposive sample of 74 participants, comprising fourth- and fifth-grade students from a rural, low-income community school located approximately one hour from Kuala Lumpur, West Malaysia. The selection criteria focused on students who were identified by their teachers as having varied levels of English reading proficiency but without extensive exposure to English outside the classroom environment. The selected students included 39.2% male and 60.8% female students, reflecting the gender distribution within the targeted grades at the school. Prior to the data collection, informed consent was distributed and collected by the teachers in the school from all parents and legal guardians of the students. Participation would have been voluntary without any penalty had they decided to withdraw from the research. Additionally, to protect the participants' privacy, all confidential data such as names and student numbers were secured in a locked cabinet. When all data had been keyed in, all printed personal information of the students was shredded. The keyed-in data were coded, hence, no direct association could be traced to the students.

When all data had been imported into Excel, we used SPSS to compute the descriptive statistics. To examine the relationships between the variables, we used SmartPLS 3.0 to analyze the data, testing two PLS-SEM models. Model 1 examined the overall relationship between attitudes toward recreational and academic reading. Model 2 investigated the links between attitudes concerning contexts and activities in recreational and academic reading. These models are illustrated in Figures 1 and 2.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 120 children in grades 4 and 5 participated in the Reading Bus Program, attending six biweekly sessions over two months. However, some children had multiple absences and did not fully attend the six sessions, nor participate in the survey. Consequently, only 74 children responded to the survey, resulting in a response rate of 62%. Table 1 displays the distribution of children by gender and grade, with a majority of the children being girls (69.8%). All children were from Jeram, a fishing village in West Malaysia, and many did not have access to English books at home.

Table 1. Gender and grades.

Variable		No of Children	Percentage
Gender	Male	29	39.2
	Female	45	60.8
Grade	Grade 4	45	62.5
	Grade 5	29	37.5

Two models were computed for the analysis of this study to examine the relationship between children's attitudes toward recreational reading and academic reading and to evaluate the effect of contexts on children's attitudes toward both types of reading activities.

4.1 Children's Attitudes toward Academic and Recreational Reading

To analyze the data for the first research objective, we computed the descriptive statistics comparing children's scores on the indicators for recreational and academic reading attitude (see Table 2).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for recreational and academic reading.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Recreational Reading Attitude					
Post1	74	3.01	.91	1	4
Post2	74	3.19	.85	1	4
Post3	74	3.30	.84	1	4
Post4	74	3.69	.64	1	4
Post5	74	2.81	.96	1	4
Post6	74	3.88	.33	1	4
Post7	74	2.93	.94	1	4
Post8	74	2.73	.88	1	4
Post9	74	3.81	.51	1	4
Post10	74	3.41	.68	1	4
Academic Reading Attitude					
Post11	74	2.80	.88	1	4
Post12	74	2.81	1.04	1	4
Post13	74	3.12	.66	1	4
Post14	74	3.04	.82	1	4
Post15	74	3.35	.75	1	4
Post16	74	3.04	.91	1	4
Post17	74	3.31	.84	1	4
Post18	74	3.08	.84	1	4
Post19	74	3.18	1.01	1	4
Post20	74	3.20	.95	1	4

As presented in Table 2, the mean scores for recreational reading attitude range from 2.73 to 3.88, indicating a favorable attitude towards recreational reading activities. Conversely, the highest variability was found in Post5 (SD = 0.96), indicating diverse responses to this particular reading activity. For academic reading, the mean scores varied from 2.80 to 3.35, reflecting a slightly less positive attitude compared to recreational reading. These descriptive statistics offer a comprehensive insight into primary school children's attitudes towards reading. It is expected that their attitudes toward recreational reading would be more positive compared to their attitudes toward academic reading.

4.3 Association between Attitudes towards Academic and Recreational Reading

To investigate the link between children's attitudes toward recreation and academic reading (the second research objective), Model 1 was drawn and analyzed using the PLS-SEM approach (Figure 1). Partial Least Squares (PLS) is an approach to Structural Equation Model (SEM) that allows researchers to analyze the relationships between multiple variables simultaneously (Ramli et al., 2018). Model 1 shows the relationship between two constructs – attitudes toward recreational and academic reading. The results of PLS-SEM involve two stages of examination. The

first step is to evaluate the measurement model. To assess a reflective measurement model, four indicators are observed: factor loadings, internal consistency reliability, convergence validity, and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2019). Table 2 shows the results of Model 1 measurement model.

The factor loadings in Model 1 are larger than .500 and there are some factor loadings larger than .708, the recommended threshold as these numbers indicate that the construct explains more than 50 percent of the indicators' variance, providing acceptable reliability (Hair et al., 2019). These values show that Model 1 is a good fit.

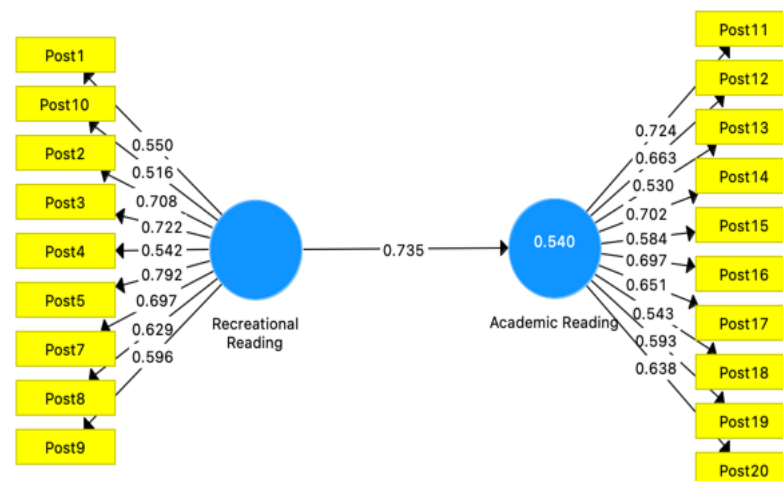


Figure 1. Model 1.

After achieving satisfactory results for the measurement model, we proceeded to assess the structural model. In Model 1, we found that 54 percent of the variance in children's attitude toward academic reading was explained by their attitude toward recreational reading, indicating a strong influence of attitude toward recreational reading on academic reading.

The strong influence of attitudes toward recreational reading on academic reading could be attributed to several factors. Firstly, recreational reading provided students with an opportunity to develop a love for reading and a positive attitude towards books. When students were engaged in reading for pleasure, they were more likely to view reading as an enjoyable activity rather than a chore. This positive attitude toward reading could then transfer to their academic reading, making it a more enjoyable and engaging experience.

The influence of students' attitudes and perceptions towards reading on their academic reading abilities has been well-documented in previous research. For example, Baba and Affendi (2020) highlighted the importance of students' attitudes and perceptions towards reading in shaping their academic reading abilities. Furthermore, Nootens et al. (2019) revealed that students in Grades 5 to 8 exhibited more positive attitudes towards leisure reading than academic reading, suggesting a discrepancy in attitudes towards different types of reading. Moreover, the study by Pujiningtyas and Ena (2023) emphasized that attitude towards reading includes evaluations of content and purpose, feelings about engaging in a particular kind of reading, and action readiness for initiating or sustaining reading activity, further expanding the discussion of the attitudes toward reading. This comprehensive understanding of attitudes is crucial in assessing their impact on academic reading.

Importantly, our findings suggest a substantive influence of recreational reading on academic reading attitudes, with 54 percent of the variance in academic reading attitudes accounted for by recreational reading. This significant correlation highlights the important role of recreational reading in shaping academic reading from multiple perspectives. Psychologically, the intrinsic motivation and joy from recreational reading may cultivate resilience and positive attitudes towards engagements with texts and prints. This association is explained by [Ryan and Deci's \(2000\)](#) Self-Determination Theory, which suggests that activities that fulfill intrinsic needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness can enhance overall motivation and engagement in related domains. Pedagogically, our findings suggest an integrated curriculum that provides a platform where students can interact with both recreational and academic reading for learning purposes. Teachers could use students' interests from recreational reading to select academic texts to make reading tasks more enjoyable.

4.3 Factors Influencing Children's Reading Attitudes

To analyze the data in line with the third objective, we computed Model 2. In model 2, we evaluated the effect of contexts on children's attitudes toward reading activities for both recreational and academic reading. The relationships tested are reflected in Figure 2. A total of three relationships were examined: 1) the relationship between recreational reading context and recreational reading activity, 2) the relationship between academic reading context and academic reading activity, and 3) the relationship between recreational reading activity and academic reading activity.

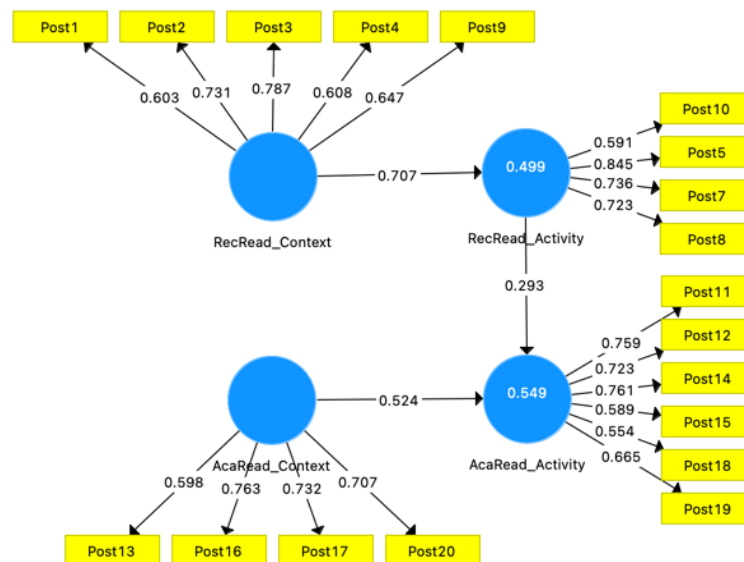


Figure 2. Model 2.

The measurement model results (see Table 3) are satisfactory. Factor loadings of the indicator are higher than .50. The composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha of all constructs are higher than .70. The values of AVE are higher than .50, and the discriminant validity using the Fornel-Lacker criterion has also been met. The measurement results indicate that the structural model is worth evaluating.

Table 3. The measurement model results.

Constructs	CR	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE	Discriminant Validity			
Academic reading – context related	.836	.763	.536	.708			
Academic reading – activity-related	.795	.728	.504	.701	.703		
Recreational reading – context related	.817	.747	.532	.614	.614	.729	
Recreational reading – activity-related	.809	.737	.526	.596	.654	.703	.709

The result of the structural model is captured in Table 4. All path coefficients were statistically significant in this model, with an R^2 of 54.9 percent, indicating a model with moderate explanatory strength. It is expected that the attitude toward the context of reading (e.g., how the children feel about having books or receiving books as a gift) is the driver of the attitude toward the activity of reading (e.g., how they feel about spending free time to read), and respectively, a similar pattern of the result was found for academic reading. The linkage between attitude toward the activity of recreational reading with the activity of academic reading was significant but small (.293).

Table 4. Model 2: The structural model results.

Constructs	Path Coefficient	T Statistics	P	CI	
				2.5%	97.5%
R2 = 0.546;					
RecRead_Context -> RecRead_Activity	0.707	14.960	0.000	0.620	0.813
RecRead_Activity -> AcaRead_Activity	0.293	2.369	0.018	0.027	0.508
AcaRead_Context -> AcaRead_Activity	0.524	5.860	0.000	0.354	0.711

The study demonstrated a strong relationship between children's attitudes toward recreational and academic reading. Additionally, the context of reading played a significant role in shaping children's attitudes toward both recreational and academic reading activities. These findings can inform the development of the Reading Bus Program and educational policies aimed at promoting literacy, particularly among underprivileged and non-native English-speaking children.

This study illuminates the intricate relationship between recreational and academic reading attitudes among children, echoing findings from McKenna et al. (2012), who observed consistent reading attitudes across grades in the U.S. This parallel suggests a universal influence of recreational reading on academic reading attitudes, a relationship further validated by Petscher's (2010) meta-analysis linking positive reading attitudes with higher reading achievement. Such connections underscore the transformative potential of a positive disposition towards recreational reading in enhancing academic reading performance.

The contextual factors shaping reading attitudes, as discussed by Cheng et al. (2009) and Samsuddin et al. (2019), resonate with our observations, highlighting the critical role of the reading environment in fostering or hindering reading engagement. This aligns with the proven effectiveness of peer-assisted learning strategies (Fuchs et al., 2000; Ginsburg-Block et al., 2006; Roscoe & Chi, 2007) and the impact of role

models in reading (Guthrie et al., 2007; Lynch & Zwerling, 2020) in bolstering reading fluency and attitudes. Such findings advocate for the incorporation of collaborative learning and mentorship in reading programs to cultivate a supportive reading culture.

Our study further emphasizes the significance of the reading context, as children who experience a supportive environment, characterized by access to diverse reading materials and engagement with enthusiastic role models, exhibit more positive attitudes towards reading. This observation is in harmony with Krashen (2004), who highlighted the motivational boost provided by a print-rich environment and the availability of engaging reading materials. The Reading Bus Program, by creating such an environment, notably contributed to nurturing favorable reading attitudes, underscoring the essential role of context in promoting reading engagement.

Synthesizing these insights, our research contributes to a broader understanding of the dynamics between reading attitudes and educational outcomes. It affirms the necessity of fostering positive recreational reading attitudes as a foundation for academic success and the importance of a conducive reading environment, supported by peer interaction and role models, in shaping children's reading experiences. These findings not only align with prior research but also extend the discourse on reading attitudes, offering valuable implications for educational practitioners and policymakers aiming to enhance literacy development among children.

6. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the reading attitudes of primary school children participating in the Reading Bus Program. Our analysis, utilizing the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey, revealed distinct attitudes toward recreational and academic reading. Consistently, children exhibited a stronger preference for recreational reading over academic reading. This preference highlighted the intrinsic motivation and enjoyment derived from reading for pleasure which, as our study suggested, could serve as a foundation for enhancing attitudes towards academic reading when leveraged strategically. The introduction of reading partners and a supportive reading environment through the Reading Bus Program played a pivotal role in shaping these positive attitudes. The engagement with volunteers not only facilitated reading comprehension and fluency but also provided a model of enthusiasm for reading that children can emulate. This finding highlighted the importance of social and contextual factors in promoting reading engagement among young learners.

While this study provided valuable insights, it was not without limitations. The research focused on a specific demographic, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other contexts or cultures. Additionally, the study's cross-sectional design limited the capability to make an inference of causal relationships. Future research should consider longitudinal designs to capture the evolution of reading attitudes over time and across different educational interventions and settings.

Based on our findings, we recommend the integration of recreational reading materials and activities into academic settings to harness the motivational benefits of reading for pleasure. Schools and educational policymakers should consider partnerships with community-based programs, such as the Reading Bus, to provide diverse and engaging reading experiences for children. Further research should explore the scalability of such programs across different cultural and socioeconomic contexts.

to identify adaptable strategies for fostering positive reading attitudes. Moreover, future studies should examine the impact of demographic variables, such as socio-economic status and cultural background, on the effectiveness of reading programs. Understanding these relationships is crucial in tailoring reading initiatives to meet the diverse needs of learners and in maximizing their impact on both recreational and academic reading attitudes.

Finally, our study underscores the critical role of reading programs and the social context of reading in shaping children's attitudes toward reading. These findings contribute to the existing literature on reading attitudes among ESL learners and offer practical insights for educators and policymakers striving to foster a lifelong love of reading among children.

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