READING PREFERENCES: AN ANALYSIS WITH THE PERMA MODEL OF WELLBEING

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Abstract

Reading has been a part and parcel of the society, more so in the one we live in today. Several studies on reading habits and preferences have shown to have association with and consequences on several personality and social factors. The PERMA model of wellbeing is a very comprehensive effort toward understanding the overall wellbeing of an individual on several dimensions. This study aims to explore the differences in wellbeing that can be attributed to readership and reading preferences. The study was conducted on 88 young adults from the age group of 18-25. The results showed no difference in wellbeing on the basis on readership. However, the dimensions of positive emotions, engagement and meaning under wellbeing were shown to be significantly related with increase in age. The study has important implications for further research on reading habits and preferences.

Keywords: Reading preferences, readership, PERMA, overall wellbeing

Introduction

Reading Preference

Reading literature has been proven to be one of the ways that lead to language learning. With the advent of social media in modern society, and various other digitized methods, the popularity of reading has increased as well (Dwi Syaputri, 2017). There has also been a surge in reading groups in which people from various walks of life come together with the shared interest of reading (Longden et al., 2015).

Clarke, (1980) says that reading is probably one of the most studied and least understood processes in education. Despite the fact that there have been millions of books, journals, magazines and other forms of literature, no theory of reading has been accepted by the general public.

Without reading on a regular basis, people may not completely understand what is going on around them and may not be able to keep up with the development in his or her field of expertise. Reading also helps reduce the difficulties an individual might have in their school/college, daily life, business, or even recreation (Dwi Syaputri, 2017). Depending on the kind of material presented to them, readers need to adjust effectively. Ineffective readers have a passive method of reading, and tend to be disconnected to what is being read at present and prior knowledge. Effective readers on the other hand are completely immersed in the process of reading and tend to look for meaning in their texts.

There are many forms of literature reading. In this research, we hope to elaborate mostly on fiction and non-fiction. The word fiction has its origin in *'ficcioun'* which means to fabricate or invent. It is discrete from its counterpart 'non-fiction' which generally refers to subject matter. (Djikic et al., 2013). A study conducted by Prentice et al., (1997) showed that when individuals were asked to read a piece of fiction, they were likely to believe the assertions made by the text were weak and unsupported. But fiction writers make it a point to keep in mind that the factual observations in their material are correct. Non-fiction involves areas like historical genres, self help books or biographies and autobiographies that are set in the real world.

The other way to classify literature is on the basis of the writing process. Classic literature focuses on the perception and consciousness that was projected into the author's work. Revolutionary figures like Sigmund Freud, Charles Darwin and Karl Marx wrote about war and its consequences and how it influenced people. In this, the writing was more or less the only thing to explain the ongoing situation. The scholars of this generation also used a lot of poetry to put their thoughts on paper. Modern or contemporary

literature is written in such a way that both prose and verse can be explained. This form of literature does not stress more on revolution. It focuses on the probable future, art, emotions and so on. Creativity forms a huge part of this writing process. Contemporary literature is favoured by young readers these days.

PERMA Model of Well-being

The elements of well-being are highlighted by the PERMA elements (Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment) (Seligman, 2018). The factors provide a definition for flourishing that has a mix of eudaimonic and hedonic elements. Positive emotions make up the hedonic element, which includes pleasure, ecstasy, warmth and comfort. Engagement brings into focus the flow- which talks about how individuals get absorbed in an activity and are mindful of the present moment. Relationships touch upon how individuals require positive relationships with other people and the lack of this is unfavourable to the wellbeing of the individual (Birch et al., 2019). Meaning forms the eudaimonic element that refers to having a sense of purpose and feeling connected to something larger than oneself (Khaw & Kern, 2014). This shows that individuals who claim to have meaningful lives generally also score higher when it comes to happiness and satisfaction (Baumeister et al., 2013). Accomplishment involves achieving or even making progress with regard to one's goals which lead to personal fulfillment or even public recognition.

The PERMA Model has 23 items including a few filler questions. It successfully measures the PERMA elements along with its correlated components (Butler & Kern, 2016).

Literature Review

Keith Oatley (2016) in his paper called Fiction: Simulation of social words, wrote about the role of reading in enhancing the empathy skills and theory of mind of fiction readers. He stated that reading not only enhanced the imagination capacities of its readers but also allowed them to view things from a new perspective, taking into account the thought processes, emotions and their relation of a new character altogether, hence, contributing greatly to their social skills of empathy and theory of mind.

A study was conducted at the University of Sussex and the results were significant for readers. It was shown individuals who spent as little as 6 minutes of their day reading a book or a newspaper had a reduction of about 68% in their stress levels. The flow element of reading appeared to be the biggest contributor to this reduction in stress. (Lewis, 2009)

Bavishi, Slade and Levy (2016) conducted a longitudinal study at Yale University to understand if reading contributed to one's life span. The results of the study showed that reading a book for just half an hour a day contributed to an additional 2 years of one's life span. Reading books for less than 3.5 hours a week were 17% less likely to die while those who read more than 3.5 hours a week were 23% less likely to die.

A study was conducted to see if reading a nonfiction essay or a piece of fiction (short story) had differing effects on an individual's cognition. The results of the study showed that the fiction readers were less rigid and more creative than the essay readers. These results were further amplified for regular fiction readers. (Djikic, Oatley and Moldoveanu, 2013)

A very interesting research by Djikic et al. (2009) attempted to understand if reading fiction caused changes in self-perception of one's own personality. Participants filled questionnaires on personality factors and emotional skills after which they were randomly allocated to two groups. The experimental group which read a short fiction underwent a significant change in their perception of their own personality traits as compared to the control group highlighting the role of one of the different art forms and its role in personal growth.

Rizzolo et al. (2009) conducted a study to understand the effects of humor, yoga and reading on stress among students. The researchers found that a 30 minute session of any of these had a very similar effect in decreasing stress among science students. This result has immense significance as it shows that reading may be just as effective in reducing stress as yoga may be.

Reading Well, a book subscription program by the UK's National Health Service is a unique program that offers book recommendations given by experts which help one manage their health and wellbeing better. A survey conducted showed that this program has reached around 2.6 million lives and 91% of them found it to be helpful.

In a study conducted by Fong, Mullin and Mar (2013), an attempt was made to understand the role of different genres of fiction on interpersonal sensitivity. The results of the study showed that Romance and Suspense/thrillers appeared to have the most significant impact on interpersonal sensitivity among the subjects.

Longden et al (2015) conducted a study on shared reading : assessing the intrinsic value of a literature based health intervention. The quantitative results of the study indicated that shared reading as an intervention helped enhance the purpose of life of the individual.

'Enduring links from childhood mathematics and reading achievement to adult socioeconomic status' was a study undertaken by Ritchie and Bates (2013). The results showed that early experiences with mathematics and reading helped improve the attainment of a good job and hence a better socio economic status across the life span.

A study was conducted to understand the Sources of Meaning of Life among Chinese University students and the results showed that when reading was provided as an intervention, the meaning of life of the students increased. (Zhang et al, 2016).

Methodology

Problem: Reading Preferences: An Analysis with the PERMA Model of Wellbeing.

Objectives:

- To establish the relationship between overall wellbeing and age.

- To explore the levels of overall wellbeing of readers and non-readers.

Hypotheses:

H1: There is a relationship between overall wellbeing and age.

H$_0$2: There is no difference in overall wellbeing on the basis of readership.

Research Design: The current study is exploratory and quantitative in nature in which the relationship between Reading Preference and the PERMA Model of Well-being is studied. A between group design is used to study the differences between age groups and participants who are readers and those who are not.

Sampling procedure: The sample consists of 88 young adults between the age group of 18-25 years. The data was collected using convenient sampling method.

Tools used:

- PERMA Profiler- The scale was developed by Julie Butler and Margaret Kern in 2016. The scale gives an overall level of The reliability measure of the scale was found to be 0.71 to 0.89 for positive emotion, 0.6 to 0.81 for engagement, 0.75 to 0.85 for relationships, 0.85 to 0.92 for meaning and 0.70 to 0.86 for accomplishments.

Statistics Used:

The data was studied using measures of central tendency, Pearson correlation and t-test.

Result and Discussion

Table 1.0 showing the descriptives of age, reading habit and overall well-being (along with subscales)

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Age	20.85	2.06
Reading Habit	6.64	2.2
Overall wellbeing	114.81	20.55
Positive emotions	20.25	5.57
Engagement	22.46	4.41
Relationships	20.75	5.79
Meaning	19.82	6.69
Achievement	19.87	5.44

Table 2.0 showing the correlation between age and overall wellbeing (along with the subscales)

		Overall wellbeing	Positive emotions	Enagagement	Relationships	Meaning	Achievement
Age	Pearson Correlation	0.291	0.289**	0.298**	0.18	0.270*	0.079

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As seen in Table 2.0, there is a significant positive correlation between age and positive emotions, engagement and meaning. Therefore, this means that as age of the participants was increasing, there was a significant increase in their positive emotions, engagement and meaning. However, there was no significant correlation between age and overall wellbeing and its subscales of relationships and achievement.

Table 3.0 showing the difference in overall wellbeing on the basis of readership

	t-test for Equality for Means
Overall wellbeing	-0.357

As seen in Table 3.0, there is no significant difference in overall wellbeing on the basis of readership. This means that one's identification as being a reader or non-reader has no difference on their overall wellbeing.

Discussion

The results of the study are discussed on the basis of the hypotheses. The first hypothesis states that there is a positive relationship between overall wellbeing and age. It was found that as the age of the participants increased, the feeling of positive emotions increased as well. A research conducted by Dello Russo et al., (2021) supports the findings of the current research. Age was also seen to have a significant positive correlation with engagement. This could be a reason of the fact that strong commitment to the work being done and the resources available as the individual is older could mediate an increase in the engagement. Kim & Kang, (2017). Age was also significantly positively correlated with meaning in life. A research conducted by Reker, (2005) also concluded that the personal meaning in life of an individual increases with age. This could be because as individuals become more psychologically and physically healthier, the meaning in life also increases. Coupled with an increase in job satisfaction, it could help attain more meaning in life. There was no significant difference in the relationship between age with relationships and acheivement. This could be because as individuals grow older, because of more maturity, the quality of relationships including the positive emotions experienced in the relationship tend to be more important than the number of relationships. In terms of acheivement, once people grow older, there are other responsibilities that need to be taken care of which could hinder the process of reaching their goals and attaining achievement.

The second hypothesis states that there is no significant difference in overall wellbeing on the basis of readership. The results showed a negative difference between overall wellbeing and readership but did

not reach statistical significance. According to (Dali, 2014), reading need not necessarily have only positive emotions. Some adverse reactions could be obsession, guilt and fear and these may magnify the negative thoughts the individuals might have and could make them feel worse which would only contribute to a decrease in wellbeing for avid readers.

Limitations

Some of the limitations in the study include the small sample size. In the current study, 88 males and females were studied. Another drawback would be the inconsiquential age range. Individuals betwwen the age group of 18 and 25 were taken into consideration.

Future suggestions

For future research and intended researchers, the resultsof this study provide an essential support to studying how Readership (whether the person is a reader or a non reader) has an effect on overall Well-being. An improvement of the scores obtained in this study could be done by increasing the sample size and studying the variables on a large age range.

Recommendations

The sample population of the current study focused on Readership and overall Well-being. Recommendations for future research would include considering similar variables along other study areas such as empathy. A study condcuted by Djikic et al., (2013) showed that frequent fiction readers had higher scores on non- self report measures of empathy. Another area studied is reading fiction on e-readers. Kuzmičová et al., (2020) conducted a study where the results showed that the experience of reading on the digital mode had an effect on the individual's immediate enviroment as well as cognitive implications.

Conclusion

The objective of this research was to study the relationship between overall wellbeing and readership, that is whether participants were readers or non-readers. 88 participants were chosen for the study. The results of the study showed a significant positive correlation between age and positive emotions, engagement and meaning. There was no significant relationship between age and relationships and achievement. There was also no significant relationship between overall wellbeing and readership.

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