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GENDER VARIABLES IN READING BEHAVIOR OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE INTERNET ERA

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Abstract

This study aimed to explain the cultural behavior of reading junior high school students in the internet era based on gender variables. The study was designed with a quantitative approach. The study population was high school students in four districts / cities in South Sulawesi and West Sulawesi, namely Makassar City, Soppeng Regency, Tana Toraja Regency, and Majene Regency. Data collection was done using a questionnaire. Analysis of research data was carried out through descriptive statistical analysis and inferential statistical analysis which included three stages, including; (1) data management, (2) statistical analysis, and (3) interpretation of results. Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS 23 and it was presented in the form of tables, diagrams, and verbal exposure. The results showed that there were significant differences in reading behavior of female students and male students based on (1) the type of reading material that is read, (2) the effort to obtain reading material, (3) the time used to read, (4) the values believed in reading habits, and (5) post-reading habits. The theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

Keywords: reading behavior, interest in reading, internet, millennial generation

Introduction

In the past 20 years, internet usage by citizens of the world has increased by more than 20 fold. OECD (2018) and International Telecommunications Union (2014) note that in 2014, internet users had reached more than three billion worldwide (40.4%). That number increased very rapidly compared to 1997 which only reached 1.7%. Now, the internet has an important role and an increasingly widespread use area, including: (1) for the learning process in the school and outside the school; (2) to work, both real and virtual; (3) for the administration of government; (4) utilization in the economic field and tax affairs; (5) handling health problems; and (6) utilization as a means of entertainment (OECD, 2018).

The widespread use of the internet has implications for reading activities. OECD (2018) formulates a new definition of reading literacy. The definition of reading literacy is updated and expanded to accommodate the use of information technology skills in reading. Previously, literacy reading was meant as the ability to understand, interpret and reflect on a single text. Now, reading literacy is defined as a complex information processing strategy: analyzing, synthesizing, integrating, and interpreting relevant information from various texts or sources of information (OECD, 2018).

The presence of the internet with its increasingly widespread use has changed the reading behavior of young children. Those who were born as millennials because they were very familiar with the internet showed a shift in reading culture. Sultan's study (2016) in elementary schools shows that the internet has changed student behavior in reading activities. In the aspect of internet use, elementary school students have a high percentage of internet activities. Watching activities are slowly displaced by accessing social media activities. Primary school students also experience a shift in behavior from reading printed material to reading material online. One other important finding from this study is that reading activity is not a priority activity undertaken by students in using the internet.

Gender factors are variables that influence reading behavior. The results of Clark and Foster (2005) show that men and women have differences in terms; (1) the type of reading that was enjoyed, (2) the intensity of pleasure in reading, (3) the reason for reading activities, (4) and post-reading behavior. The results of Sultan's study (2016) revealed that gender variables have an influence on high school elementary school students' reading behavior. Female students have higher internet utilization intensity compared to male students. However, both male and female students do not make reading activities the main activity in the internet. Male students most often use the internet to play online games, while female students use the internet more often to access social media. Male and female students show different interests in the topic of

fiction and nonfiction readings and the effort to obtain reading material. Female students show more persistent effort than male students. Female and male students do not have behavioral differences in aspects of reading habits and values believed in reading. The results of this study indicate that gender variables are one of the determining factors in young children's reading behavior. Based on this research, it is assumed that high school students with a more mature age and greater internet utilization opportunities have also experienced a reading culture shift.

The studies described have become the basis for conducting research on the reading behavior of high school students in the internet era. Some assumptions underlying this research, namely (1) high school students including groups of young people who have been connected and active with the internet; (2) high school students are a large number of device users (gadgets); and (3) ownership of devices with internet-connected access has formed a new culture and changed the previous culture in reading activities of high school students.

This research has an important meaning to do because reading culture has a role in helping students' academic and social success. Reading is a learning skill needed to complete academic tasks. Besides this, a good reading culture can help develop thinking skills. In the end, a good reading culture can support student career success.

Another factor that underlies the importance of this study is the reading achievement of high school students based on low-class international studies. A recent study of Performance in International Reading Literacy Survey (PISA) found that the average Indonesian student reading score was only 397 and ranked 64 of 70 countries (OECD, 2016). The achievement is far below the ideal reading skill average, which is a score of 500. By revealing the reading behavior of high school students, it is expected that the right solution to improve student reading performance is expected.

This study aims to reveal the reading behavior of high school students in the internet era. Research focuses on gender factors. The results of the study can be used in designing learning strategies, teaching materials, and fostering reading behaviors that are appropriate to the needs of high school students.

Method

This research is classified as quantitative research. By its nature, research is categorized as explanatory research. The population of this research is high school students in four cities / regencies in South Sulawesi and West Sulawesi, namely Makassar City, Soppeng Regency, Tana Toraja Regency, and Majene Regency. The number of samples is 341 people consisting of 200 women and 141 men. To collect data, a questionnaire was used. The questionnaire provided consists of two main parts, namely questions related to the respondent's personal information and statements about reading behavior.

The reading behavior instrument developed was adapted from Mansor et al. (2013) Indicators that represent student reading behavior include: (1) types of reading material that is read, (2) effort to obtain reading material, (3) time spent reading, (4) values believed in reading habits, and (5) post-reading habits. The questionnaire was developed through closed questions. Answer choices have been prepared for students and they only choose one of the appropriate answers. Each prepared answer option is given 1-4 weight.

Data collection was done by providing opportunities for students to fill out questionnaires freely. To minimize misperceptions in giving answers, the questionnaire was carried out in a classical manner and guided by researchers. Data analysis was carried out through quantitative data analysis techniques with t-test.

Results and Discussion

Reading behavior of junior high school students in the internet era is presented based on five aspects of measured reading behavior. The results of the study are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Gender Differences in Reading in the Internet Era

Reading Behavior Aspects in the Internet Age	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Types of Accessed Reading Materials	2,938	,087	3,599	439	,000	1,223	,340	,555	1,891

Effort of Getting Reading Materials	2,938	,087	3,599	439	,000	1,223	,340	,555	1,891
Time Used for Reading	,255	,614	3,237	439	,001	,769	,238	,302	1,236
Believed Value for Reading Activity	,006	,937	4,413	439	,000	1,047	,237	,581	1,513
Post-reading habits	3,565	,060	5,053	439	,000	2,189	,433	1,338	3,041

The results showed that based on aspects of the type of reading accessed by high school students, there were significant differences between women and men. In general, the reading sources accessed by high school students consist of fiction and nonfiction readings. Male students generally enjoy accessing sports, fiction and horror-themed readings, while female students prefer to practice friendship, romance and art and lifestyle-themed reading.

From the effort aspect of obtaining reading material, it was found that there were significant differences between the behavior of female students and male students. The results of the analysis that women show a harder effort than men in an effort to find reading material. Descriptive statistical analysis showed that the average score of female students was 19.47, while male students were 18.45. Efforts to obtain reading material include the use of internet access, downloading digital reading sources.

From the aspect of time used to read, it was found that there were significant differences between the behavior of female students and male students. The results of the analysis show that female students use longer reading times compared to female students.

Based on the aspects of value that are believed to be reading activities, it was found that female students had more positive attitudes than male students. Descriptive statistical analysis shows that female students get an average score of 24.10 compared to male students who scored 23.05. The values believed in reading activities are related to the perceptions of high school students towards reading activities which are seen as fun, boring, important, heavy activities, and time consuming activities.

From aspects of post-reading habits, it was found that female students had more positive habits than male students. Descriptive statistical analysis showed that women got an average score of 32.03 compared to men who only got a score of 29.84. Post-reading habits include activities undertaken by students in relation to their reading activities, including the activity of telling people the contents of reading.

The research results that have been described are in line with the findings of research conducted to measure reading behavior based on gender variables with printed reading sources. The results of Clark and Foster (2005) show that men and women have differences in terms; (1) the type of reading that was liked, (2) the intensity of pleasure in reading, (3) the reason for reading activities, (4) and post-reading behavior. Research conducted in the internet age with digital reading sources confirms these findings. Thus, it can be concluded that internet presence does not change reading behavior seen from a gender perspective.

From the aspect of time utilization, this study reveals that the time used by students to surf occupies the highest portion of other activities, including reading activities. More than 50% of students claim to spend an internet time of 3 to 4 hours a day. These findings are in line with Nurhadi's findings (2011) in SMP and Sultan (2016) in elementary schools which revealed the use of time that is more widely used for surfing.

The results of the study that showed differences in reading behavior of female and male students in high school had implications for reading learning and the development of reading interest. Teachers in schools ideally facilitate students to learn according to the characteristics of the preferred reading material. Likewise with the development of students' interest in reading in schools, the provision of digital versions of reading material has become a necessity. Digital libraries have become a necessity today. This is in accordance with the results of research that shows that the utilization of internet time of students is in the high category. The provision of digital libraries can channel the need for internet use to positive activities and value learning.

Further research linking the intensity of time used on the internet with student reading achievement is needed in the future. As is known that the achievements of Indonesian students in reading literacy can be categorized as low. The use of the internet by students has two different sides. From one side, the presence of the internet can provide an opportunity to access readings more easily which can affect the interests, and achievement of reading to be better. On the other hand, the use of the internet can also further reduce the opportunity for students to read because activities are dominated by social media activities.

Conclusions

Based on the results of the study concluded that there are significant differences between the reading behavior of high school students based on gender differences. The results show that female students and male students access different reading materials. In general, female students show more positive reading behavior compared to male students. These findings confirm the differences in reading behavior with printed material between women and men revealed through previous studies. Practically, the findings of this study recommend the need for teacher adjustments in facilitating reading learning by providing reading material that suits students' interests based on gender variables and providing digital reading resources to channel students' internet interests.

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