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## **An Investigation into Adolescents' Self-perception as Readers**

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**Abstract.** The purpose of this study is to investigate adolescents' (Grade 8, Grade 9, and Grade 10 students) self-perception as readers. The sample consisted of 184 students (91 males and 93 females). Students' self-perception as readers were measured by using Reader Self-perception Scale 2 was developed by Henk, Melnick, and Marinak (2013). Descriptive statistics, independent sample *t* test, and one-way ANOVA were used for data analysis. This study showed that young learners' self-perception as readers was satisfactory. According to the results of the *t* test, female students' self-perception as readers was significantly higher than that of male students at  $p < .05$ . One-way ANOVA revealed that Grade 10 students' self-perception as reader specifically in progress category was highest among Grade 8, Grade 9, and Grade 10 students at  $p < .01$ .

**Keywords.** Self-perception as Readers, Adolescents, Gender, Grade

### **1. Introduction**

#### **1.1 Importance of the Study**

Reading is the key to all aspects of education and improving reading instruction continues to be an issue of national focus. As students are active participants in the process of learning to read and becoming independent readers, their views on the process of reading are considered. Homze (1962, cited in Phillips, 1997) views self-concept as the child's ability to identify with others. A selection of desirable traits found in others that the child would like to possess is adapted by the child to achieve social acceptance. The child then chooses to keep the socially rewarding relationship between reading traits which make up his or her self-concepts. In the earliest years of children, how they think about themselves come largely from how people react to them, how parents and caregivers handle and care for them. As they grow older, teenagers broaden their people watching. At the same time, teenagers are peering outward at others, they are also looking inward at themselves. Consciously, they weigh whether others' thoughts, attitudes, actions and reactions will work for them. Then, they begin to see themselves in their own way. Self-perception comes from our experiences. If we have experiences that help us achieve the thing we want, we will positively see ourselves. One of the most important beliefs that influence our leadership capability is our view of our own ability to carry out a task. Our ability to perform successfully enhances the probability of actually doing it. Conversely, negative beliefs decrease the probability.

Reader self-perception is defined as the process of understanding how one views oneself as a reader and how one feels about and values the act of reading (Henk, Marinak, & Melnick, 2013). Children and adolescents with positive feeling about literacy will engage frequently in reading and writing. (Alvermann, 2008, cited in Carney, 2013). This increased involvement contributes to enhancing reading and writing ability. Conversely, students who have a less positive feeling about reading and writing, they will tend to be inattentive, less engagement and uncommitted and their achievement tend to lag (Spaulding, 1992, cited in Henk, et al., 2013).

Copious evidence indicates that some boys view reading as feminine (Government of the UK, 2000 and Fendrick, 1998) and that these perceptions may affect their motivation to engage in reading (Baker & Wigfield, 1999) (cited in Katz, 2009). Girls are more apt to be focused on reading. Boys have a harder time getting attention on reading because they are more assertive. On average, girls view on all aspects in more positive terms than boys. Although there is considerable research on the nature of teaching reading from a variety of viewpoints, little has focused on student perspectives. Therefore, this study will investigate adolescents' reader self-perception.

## **1.2 Aims of the Study**

The main aim of this study is to investigate into reader self-perception of Grade 8, Grade 9, and Grade 10 students. The specific objectives of this study are as follow:

1. to compare students' self-perception as readers by gender and
2. to compare students' self-perception as readers by Grade.

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1 Method**

The survey method and descriptive research design were taken in this study.

### **2.2 Sample**

By using a simple random sampling method, 61 students from Grade 8 and 63 students from Grade 9 and 60 students from Grade 9 were chosen from Practising High School, Sagaing University of Education (2016–2017 Academic Year). The total sample was 184 students. There were 91 male and 93 female students in the total sample.

### **2.3 Instrument**

Reader Self-perception Scale 2 (RSPS 2) was used in this study to measure the participants' self-perception about reading. It was developed by Henk, Melnick, and Marinak (2013). It was originated from the RSPS (Reader Self-perception Scale) developed by Melnick and Henk (1995). The original 1995 version was intended to measure the reading perception of children in Grade 4 through 6. So, Henk, Melnick, and Marinak (2013) modified it to measure adolescent reading. The instrument, namely Reader Self-perception Scale 2 (RSPS 2) designed by Henk, Melnick, and Marinak (2013) was adapted to Myanmar version.

The Reader Self-perception Scale 2 consists of one general item and 46 specific items that relate to four categories of reader self-perception: 16 items for progress, 9 items for observational comparison, 9 items for social feedback, and 12 items for physiological states. And these statements were examined by using a five-point Likert-type scale (Strongly agree=5, Agree=4, Undecided=3, Disagree=2, Strongly disagree=1). The lowest total generalized reader self-perception possible score was 46 and the highest possible score was 230.

### 3. Data Analysis and Findings

#### 3.1 Descriptive Statistics of Reader Self-perception

In terms of descriptive statistics, minimum score, maximum score, the mean and standard deviation of the students' self-perception as readers were presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Reader Self-perception**

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
<b>Reader Self-perception</b>	184	121	222	179.89	15.941

As shown in Table 1, students' mean score of reader self-perception was 179.89 and the standard deviation was 15.941. Therefore, students' self-perception as readers was satisfactory because the observed mean score (179.89) was higher than the theoretical mean score (138).

#### 3.2 Descriptive Statistics for Dimensions of Reader Self-perception

For four categories of reader self-perception: progress, observational comparison, social feedback, and physiological states, descriptive analysis was conducted. The minimum score, maximum score, the mean and standard deviation of each category were presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Dimensions of Reader Self-perception**

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Mean %	Std. Deviation
<b>Progress</b>	184	41	80	66.57	83.21%	6.143
<b>Observational Comparison</b>	184	15	44	31.26	69.46%	4.091
<b>Social Feedback</b>	184	13	42	29.93	66.51%	4.673
<b>Physiological States</b>	184	33	60	52.14	86.90%	5.351

According to Table 2, students had the highest mean percentage in physiological states and the lowest mean percentage in social feedback. This result indicated that students' self-perception as readers was highest in internal feelings experiencing during reading and the lowest in social feedback.

#### 3.3 Comparison of Male and Female Students' Reader Self-perception

To find the difference of reader self-perception between male and female students, descriptive analysis was conducted.

**Table 3: Means and Standard Deviations for Reader Self-perception by Gender**

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Difference
Reader Self-perception	Male	91	176.70	18.539	-6.31
	Female	93	183.01	12.222	

As mentioned in Table 3, the mean score of reader self-perception for female students exceeded 6.31 than that of male students. To determine whether these differences were significant or not, the independent sample *t* test was conducted.

**Table 4: The Result of *t* test for Reader Self-perception by Gender**

Variable	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Mean Difference
Reader Self-perception	-2.730	182	.007	-6.31

According to the result of the *t* test, there was a significant difference in reader self-perception between males and females at 0.05 level ( $p < 0.05$ ). This result indicated that female students' self-perception as readers were significantly higher than that of male students. To be specific, the researcher investigated whether there were significant differences in all dimensions of reader self-perception by gender.

### 3.4 Comparison of Male and Female Students' Self-perception as Readers in Different Dimensions

For a comparative study of male and female students towards reader self-perception in different dimensions, descriptive analysis was conducted.

**Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for Reader Self-perception by Gender in Different Categories**

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Difference
Progress	Male	91	65.52	6.812	-2.07
	Female	93	67.59	5.245	
Observational Comparison	Male	91	30.85	4.575	-0.81
	Female	93	31.66	3.534	
Social Feedback	Male	91	29.23	5.363	-1.38
	Female	93	30.61	3.788	
Physiological States	Male	91	51.11	6.142	-2.04
	Female	93	53.15	4.240	

According to Table 5, in general, the female students more perceived as readers themselves than male students in all dimensions of reader self-perception. To examine whether there were significant differences in these dimensions, the independent sample *t* test was conducted.

**Table 6: The Result of *t* test for Reader Self-perception by Gender in Different Categories**

Variables	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Mean Difference
Progress	-2.318	182	0.22	-2.075
Observational Comparison	-1.345	182	0.180	-.810
Social Feedback	-2.023	182	0.045	-1.382
Physiological States	-2.628	182	0.009	-2.041

The results of the *t* test showed a significant difference between reader self-perception scores of males and females in social feedback and physiological states ( $p < .05$ ). Female students had higher self-perception as readers in social feedback and physiological states. In the rest dimensions, no significant differences were found.

### 3.5 Comparison of Reader Self-perception by Grade

To investigate the difference in students' reader self-perception by Grade, descriptive statistics were made.

**Table 7: Descriptive Statistics for Reader Self-perception by Grade**

Variable	Grade	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Reader Self-perception	Grade 8	61	177.02	16.199
	Grade 9	63	178.00	17.095
	Grade 10	60	184.80	13.320

As mentioned in Table 7, generally the mean score of students' self-perception as readers was different according to Grade.

**Table 8: The Result of ANOVA for Reader Self-perception by Grade**

Reader Self-perception	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Between Groups	2175.242	2	1087.621	4.441	0.013
Within Groups	44330.584	181	244.920		
Total	46505.826	183			

According to Table 8, there was a significant difference in reader self-perception by Grade ( $F = 4.441, p < 0.05$ ). To obtain more detailed information in each Grade for reader self-perception, the Post-Hoc test was executed by the Tukey HSD method.

**Table 9: Result of Tukey (HSD) for Reader Self-perception among Three Selected Grades**

(I) Grade	(J) Grade	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
Grade 8	Grade 9	-.984	.935
	Grade 10	-7.784*	.019
Grade 9	Grade 8	.984	.935
	Grade 10	-6.800*	.045
Grade 10	Grade 8	7.784*	.019
	Grade 9	6.800*	.045

According to Table 9, Grade 10 students were significantly higher reader self-perception than both Grade 8 and Grade 9 students. But Grade 8 and Grade 9 students' self-perception as readers were not different.

### 3.6 Comparison of Reader Self-perception by Grade in Different Categories

For a comparative study of reader self-perception in students of Grade 8, Grade 9, and Grade 10 by different dimensions, descriptive analysis was conducted.

**Table 10: Descriptive Statistics for Reader Self-perception by Grade in Different Categories**

Variable	Grade	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Progress	Grade 8	61	64.74	6.311
	Grade 9	63	66.16	6.305
	Grade 10	60	68.85	5.082
Observational Comparison	Grade 8	61	31.15	3.911
	Grade 9	63	30.63	4.671
	Grade 10	60	32.02	3.525
Social Feedback	Grade 8	61	29.67	4.479
	Grade 9	63	29.68	4.970
	Grade 10	60	30.45	4.579
Physiological States	Grade 8	61	51.46	5.898
	Grade 9	63	51.52	5.273
	Grade 10	60	53.48	4.638

As mentioned in Table 10, generally, mean scores of Grade 10 students were highest in each category among selected Grades, and mean scores of Grade 9 students were slightly higher than that of Grade 8 students in Progress, Social Feedback, and Physiological States. To examine whether these differences were significant or not in each category, one-way ANOVA was conducted.

**Table 11: The Result of ANOVA for Different Categories of Reader Self-perception by Grade**

	Reader Self-perception	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Progress	Between Groups	527.351	2	263.676	7.483	.001

	<b>Within Groups</b>	6377.866	181	35.237		
	<b>Total</b>	6905.217	183			
	<b>Between Groups</b>	59.736	2	29.868	1.800	.168
<b>Observational Comparison</b>	<b>Within Groups</b>	3003.259	181	16.593		
	<b>Total</b>	3062.995	183			
	<b>Between Groups</b>	24.138	2	12.069	.550	.578
<b>Social Feedback</b>	<b>Within Groups</b>	3971.943	181	21.944		
	<b>Total</b>	3996.082	183			
	<b>Between Groups</b>	160.481	2	80.240	2.859	.060
<b>Physiological States</b>	<b>Within Groups</b>	5079.845	181	28.065		
	<b>Total</b>	5240.326	183			

According to Table 11, ANOVA results showed that there were significant differences only in Progress category among selected Grades at 0.01 level,  $F(2,183) = 7.483, p < .01$ . To obtain more detailed information in each Grade for Progress, the Post-Hoc test was executed by the Tukey HSD method.

**Table 12: Result of Tukey (HSD) for Progress Category of Reader Self-perception among Three Selected Grades**

(I) Grade	(J) Grade	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
<b>Grade 8</b>	<b>Grade 9</b>	-1.421	.379
	<b>Grade 10</b>	-4.112*	.001
<b>Grade 9</b>	<b>Grade 8</b>	1.421	.379
	<b>Grade 10</b>	-2.691*	.034
<b>Grade 10</b>	<b>Grade 8</b>	4.112*	.001
	<b>Grade 9</b>	2.691*	.034

Table 12 showed that Grade 10 students' self-perception as readers in the progress category was highest significantly among selected Grades (Grade 8, Grade 9, and Grade 10). However, that of Grade 8 and Grade 9 students was not significantly different.

#### 4. Discussion, Conclusion, and Suggestions

In the present study, according to descriptive statistics, students' self-perception as readers was satisfactory. Female students had a significantly higher reader self-perception than that of male students. To be specific, the difference between male and female students in each dimension of reader self-perception was pointed out. Females had more self-perception as readers than males in social feedback and physiological states with a significant difference. The present study was in line with the finding of Alloway and Gilbert (1997). They showed that boys' perception that school-based reading is feminine and linked with perceptions that reading is undesirable. However, there was no significant difference in progress and observational comparison of male and female students with a tiny amount of higher self-perception scores of females.

Then, the comparison of reader self-perception among three selected Grade levels (Grade 8, Grade 9, and Grade 10) of students was given. Grade 10 students were more perceived themselves as readers in progress category than Grade 8 students and Grade 9 students.

However, reader self-perception of Grade 8 and Grade 9 students were not significantly different. According to this result, reader self-perception might gradually increase when students reach a higher level of education because Grade 10 students are high school students, and Grade 8 and Grade 9 students are middle school students of basic education (2016–2017 Academic Year).

Teachers and parents need to support and maintain children's positive reading perceptions and attitudes and promote reading as a worthwhile activity. Teachers and parents can become models for children. Their interest and enthusiasm for reading can demonstrate its rewarding and valuable impact and contribute to children's developing self-perceptions and attitudes.

Thus, teachers and parents should foster and demonstrate positive attitudes toward reading to both boys and girls. They can model reading by practising positive reading habits, demonstrating a pleasure for reading, and by sharing their likes and dislikes of particular books with the children. Children need positive feedback for their accomplishments and plenty of reading materials and experiences with print. Teachers and parents should give praise to the children for their attempts at reading and encouragement while engaged in a reading task. It is also vital that parents and teachers promote risk-taking opportunities for readers. Furthermore, they should keep open lines of communication. Teachers should provide reading activity suggestions for parents and make every effort to inform parents of the children's progress.

To redress the apparent gender gap in reading enjoyment, we would encourage schools to continue to focus on boys and their attitudes to reading. To encourage young male readers to take part in reading practices, older male role models are needed to demonstrate reading as an enjoyable activity for males.

In conclusion, for the perspective of application to education, teachers and parents should be conscious of the key role of self-perception in learning and mastering reading and achievement. This paper will help of great contribution to the teachers and parents by making awareness of the importance of self-perception in reading to promote their children's reading ability.

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