

Reading Habits from the Perspective of Diverse Socioeconomic Status

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Abstract

Research has presented different results on students' reading habits concerning their socioeconomic status. The present study focuses on reading habits regarding the socioeconomic status of Indonesian EFL students to examine whether socioeconomic status represents students' reading habits. An online survey was conducted to observe the EFL students, followed by descriptive analysis to examine the data. This study categorizes students' socioeconomic status and reading habits level into three categories, namely high, middle, and low, to enable the researcher to determine whether there is a correlation between the two aspects. Based on the data gathered from the survey, it is found that students' reading habits are not always inferred by their socioeconomic status. Among 230 participants, 27% were from high socioeconomic status families, 59% of the students were from middle socioeconomic status, and the remaining 14% were from low socioeconomic status. Besides categorizing students' socioeconomic status, this research found that even students with the same socioeconomic status have various reading habits. Further research on reading habits among siblings is suggested to gain more detailed information on whether socioeconomic status represents students' reading habits.

Keywords: reading habits; socioeconomic status; EFL students

Introduction

Reading has been recognized as one of the essential skills that everyone in the world should have. Someone's ability to understand a text determines the next steps they take, such as decision-making, problem-solving, or retelling the ideas of the text. Wolf (as cited in Soroya & Ameen, 2020) believed reading is a non-natural process, and there are no people born with reading habits or abilities.

Davidovitch, Yavich, and Druckman (2016) defined reading habits as the way someone organizes their reading. There are several things impacting someone's reading habits. Chakravarthy (as cited in Yusof, 2010) believed that family socioeconomic status, lifestyle, and relationships between parents and children at home would significantly impact the development of reading habits and interests.

Socioeconomic status (SES) is a complex, multifaceted measure of social standing that can account for educational, occupational, and financial factors and cultural, societal, and geographical factors (Eke, Borgnakke, & Albandar, 2021). SES cannot be measured in physical units because it is an intangible construct; It is only a rough estimate, and its estimation still needs justification (Ware, 2017). Parental income, education, and occupation are the most commonly used indicators to measure someone's socioeconomic status (Lindo, 2014). Sumadi (as cited in Tarigan, 2017) stated that someone's income is influenced by their educational background.

Former researchers have conducted many studies about reading habits and socioeconomic status. Lindo (2014) conducted a study regarding family background as an elementary school student's reading comprehension predictor. He used Coleman's family background model, which has three indicators: financial capital, which refers to family income; human capital, which refers to parental education and occupation; and social capital, which measures socioeconomic status. They found that human capital and financial capital are significant predictors of SES; meanwhile, social capital was found to have a significant negative relationship with reading. Tarigan (2017), who also used family income, education, occupation, and social capital, found that the total indicators of socioeconomic status are 29.9% correlated with students' reading habits.

On the other hand, Xu & Huang (2020) found different findings in their research. Their research, which investigated the correlation between reading habits and social support, found that social support, such as parent and teacher support, positively correlated with students reading confidence, which also contributes to good reading habits. This result showed the contrasting finding of Lindo (2014), who found that social capital has a significant negative relationship to reading habits.

The previous studies showed that family income, parents' education, occupation, and social capital were the most commonly used indicators for measuring socioeconomic status, and these indicators might predict students'

reading habits. However, the previous studies primarily focused on young learner contexts. This encourages the researcher to conduct a study in adolescents' context, especially the EFL learners, by exploring the Indonesian secondary school students' reading habits concerning socioeconomic status to evaluate whether socioeconomic status predicts students' reading habits.

Research Question

The question addresses in the present study is: How is the reading habit of students with different socioeconomic status?

Research Objective

The present study aims to investigate the reading habits among Indonesian secondary school students from different socioeconomic backgrounds.

Research Contributions

The findings of this research are expected to give empirical and practical contributions as follows:

a. Empirical Contribution

The results of this study are expected to provide new information for other researchers to conduct similar research in different contexts. This study can be the sample of research investigating students' reading habits.

b. Practical Contribution

The results of this study are expected to provide information for English teachers about whether socioeconomic background is associated with students' reading habits.

Methodology

Research Design

This study implemented a Descriptive analysis survey design to examine the Indonesian EFL senior high school students' reading habits and socioeconomic status. Descriptive analysis describes the world or a phenomenon, answering questions regarding what, who, where, when, and to what extent (Loeb, Dynarski, McFarland, Morris, Reardon, & Reber, 2017). Whether the objective is to identify and describe population trends and variation, develop new measures of critical phenomena, or describe samples in studies to determine causal effects (Loeb et al., 2017). The survey design was chosen because it is not possible to

explore the reading habits of the whole Indonesian senior high school students and due to the ability of survey techniques to determine the size of the population (Breakwell, Hammond & Fife-schaw, 2000). According to McCombes (2019), there were six steps to conduct an effective survey including:

1. Determining the survey participants;
2. Deciding the type of the survey;
3. Designing questions and layout of the survey;
4. Distributing the survey;
5. Analyzing the responses; and,
6. Writing down the results.

Research Participants

The study was conducted in a state senior high school in a small town in Banyuwangi, East Java, in the 2023/2024 academic year. There were several reasons underlying the selection of the school as the research context. The first reason was the agreement between the English teacher and the researcher to conduct research in this school. The second reason was that English teachers in this school never explored the EFL students' reading habits concerning their socioeconomic status. The research was done to gain information regarding EFL students' socioeconomic status and reading habits. The data collection process was done two days with the help of the English teacher. The researcher came to ten classes of the XI grades and distributed the Google form questionnaire after delivering the research purpose and explaining how to fill the form.

Data Collection Method

In collecting the data, this study employed a questionnaire containing two sections: 1) reading enjoyment, 2) reading habits, and 3) socioeconomic status. The questionnaire was delivered to collect two primary data regarding students' reading habits and socioeconomic status. The students were asked to identify their reading habits by responding on Likert's rating scale of "never", "rarely", "sometimes", "often", and "always" (Loh et al., 2019). The range is 1-5, where "never" counts as 1, and "always" counts as 5. Several questions were also employed to give information about their socioeconomic status by choosing the number based on their socioeconomic background. After the data are successfully collected, the coding and scoring process will be carried out before tabulating the data.

Data Analysis Method

Data were analyzed by using several analysis method including validity test, reliability test, and descriptive analysis.

Validity test

In order to see the validity of the data, the following formula is established in the present study:

$$r = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (X_i - \bar{X})(Y_i - \bar{Y})}{(n - 1)S_x S_y}$$

Information:

r = pearson correlation coefficient

X_i and Y_i = research variables

\bar{X} and \bar{Y} = X and Y variables' means

n = number of cases

S_x and S_y = standard deviations of X and Y variables

Reliability Test

For reading habits reliability analyses, Cronbach's Alpha reliability test was used with the criteria of Alpha > 0,7% defined as reliable and Alpha < 0,7% as unreliable (Muijs, 2004). Meanwhile, for socioeconomic status reliability analyses, the criteria of Alpha > 0,5 is defined as acceptable, as Pallant (2020), as cited in Cucos (2022), stated that Alpha > 0,5 is acceptable if we have a questionnaire of less than ten items.

Descriptive Analysis

In the present study, the researcher analyzed the EFL students' socioeconomic status and reading habits. In order to process the collected data, we categorized students' reading habits into three categories: high, medium, and low. The categorization process is done by including researchers' justification based on the data gained from the questionnaire, as there is no exact system for measuring students' socioeconomic status and reading habits level.

Findings

Results on Students' Socioeconomic Status

After gaining data regarding socioeconomic status, the categorization is done by combining all indicators, namely parents' education, income, occupation, residency, and social power. Researchers' judgement is needed to determine the EFL students' socioeconomic status. As stated by Ware (2017), socioeconomic status is an intangible construct, and justification is needed to estimate it. The results of the categorization can be seen in the following figure:

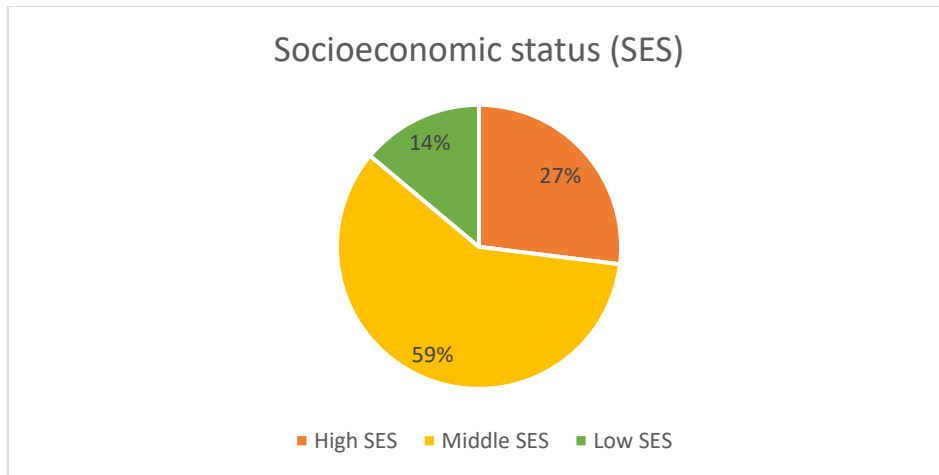


Figure 1. Percentage of EFL Students' Socioeconomic Status

Based on the data gathered from the questionnaire, it is found that among 230 participants, 27% of EFL students came from high socioeconomic status families, 59% of the students had middle socioeconomic status, and the rest, 14%, had low socioeconomic status.

Results on Students' Reading Habits

The following are the data of students' reading habits regarding their reading frequency and reading duration per session. The data is used to find out students' reading quantity on a daily basis.

Table 1. Students' Reading Habits

Reading Habits						
	Statements	Response				
		Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Reading Frequency	1. I read for almost daily	17.7%	17.3%	32.5%	21.2%	11.3%
	2. I read every other day	15.6%	17.7%	28.1%	18.2%	20.3%
	3. I read during weekends	11.7%	17.3%	29.4%	23.8%	17.7%
	4. I read during school days only	29.9%	22.9%	29%	10.8%	7.4%
	5. I do not read at all	6.5%	5.2%	18.6%	19.9%	49.8%
Reading Duration	6. 15 minutes or less	13%	21.6%	36.8%	18.6%	10%
	7. 30 minutes or less	8.7%	15.2%	34.2%	26.8%	15.2%

per session	8. One hour or less	10.4%	10.8%	23.4%	28.6%	26.8%
	9. More than one hour	10%	9.1%	18.6%	25.5%	36.8%
Reading for functional reasons	1. I read for better grades in tests and examination	43.3%	16%	27.3%	10%	3.4%
	2. I read for improving language	33.3%	19.5%	32%	13%	2.2%
	3. I read for homework and projects	36.8%	20.8%	30.3%	7.4%	4.8%
Reading for enjoyment	4. I read for relaxing	18.2%	14.3%	32%	20.3%	15.2%
	5. I read for enjoyment	19.9%	19%	29.4%	17.7%	13.9%
	6. Reading is my hobby	16.9%	8.7%	26.8%	20.3%	27.3%
	7. I like to read	21.6%	16%	33.8%	14.7%	13.9%

From the table above, it can be seen that students read mostly during school days, as found in the fourth statement, "I read during school days only", got the highest "always" score of reading frequency, which is 29.9%. Meanwhile, the most chosen reading duration has shown the shortest duration among the other options, which is 15 minutes or less, with a percentage of 13%. These results show that the EFL students' reading habits regarding reading frequency and reading duration are low to middle level. Meanwhile, in the information regarding EFL students' reading purpose, it can be seen that the first statement, "I read for better grades in tests and examinations," got the highest "always" percentage, which is 43.3%. This percentage shows that EFL students tend to conduct reading to gain better grades on tests and examinations. Meanwhile, the sixth statement, "Reading is my hobby", got the lowest "always" percentage, which is 16.9%. This percentage shows how low the number of students considered reading a hobby.

Findings on Students' Socioeconomic Status and Reading Habits

After combining the data gained from the questionnaire regarding students' socioeconomic status and reading habits, the overall data were displayed on the following figure:

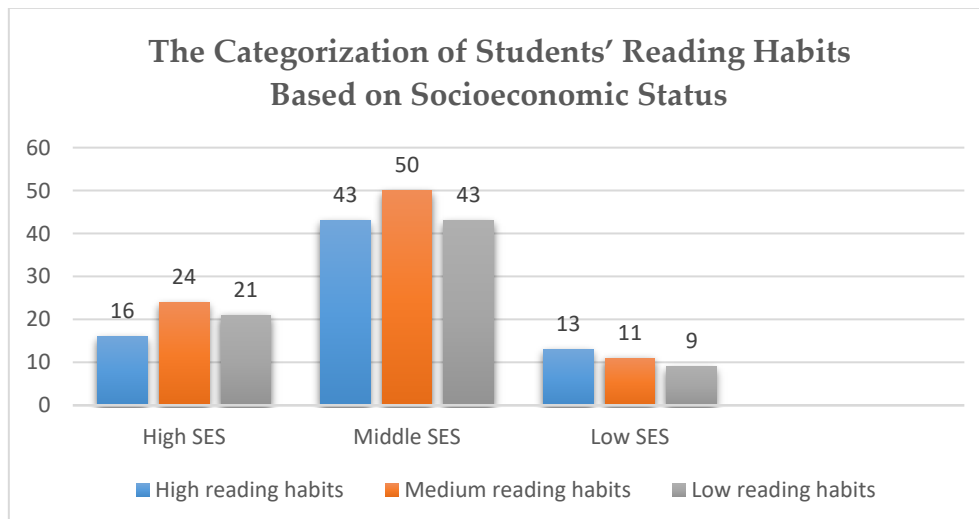


Figure 2. The Categorization of Students' Reading Habits based on Socioeconomic Status

From the table above, we may see that the students' socioeconomic status level did not always infer their reading habits. This shows the opposite result found by Yusof (2010), who states that socioeconomic status positively influences students' reading habits.

Discussion

The present study adapted a questionnaire from Loh, et al. (2019) and *Badan Pusat Statistik*. The present study was conducted in a state senior high school in Banyuwangi and gained data from 230 respondents of 11th-grade students. The survey was conducted to collect data regarding students' reading habits concerning their socioeconomic background and based on the data gained from the questionnaire, it can be seen that the level of students' socioeconomic status does not always infer their reading habits, which showed an opposite result found by Yusof (2010) who state that socioeconomic status positively influenced students' reading habits (see figure 2). The present study found that students with low socioeconomic status do not always have low reading habits, and not all students with high socioeconomic status have high reading habits level. This finding supports the research conducted by Parker et al. (2021), who state that low socioeconomic status does not always negatively impact students' academic achievement. For example, if we look at Figure 2, we may see that from the total 33 students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, 9 of the students have low reading habits, 11 of the students have medium reading habits, and 13 of the students have high reading habits, which means that even students from the same socioeconomic status may have different reading habits. In order to improve students' reading habit, using collaborative reading strategies can be a potential avenue (Khafidoh et al., 2023)

Conclusion and Suggestion

Based on the explanation of the research findings, it can be concluded that EFL students' socioeconomic status did not always infer their reading habits. It can be seen that among 230 respondents, 61 students came from high socioeconomic status families, 136 students came from middle socioeconomic status families, and the remaining 33 students came from low socioeconomic status families. If we look at Figure 2, the categorization of students' reading habits based on socioeconomic status, we can see that 61 students from families with high socioeconomic status have three different reading habit levels. 16 students have a high socioeconomic status and high reading habits level, 24 students have a high socioeconomic status and medium reading habits level, and the remaining 21 students have a high socioeconomic status and low reading habits level. These findings show that EFL students' reading habits were not always inferred by their socioeconomic status. Socioeconomic status may be related to students' reading habits to some extent. However, it is not entirely determined by students' reading habits.

Based on the limitation of the present study, that is, the research is done among students coming from different socioeconomic statuses. The researcher suggests that future researchers conduct a study regarding students or participants who are siblings or come from the same family. This suggestion is made to gain a more detailed answer as to whether socioeconomic status impacts someone's reading habits or not.

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