

## **Gender Differences Of University Graduates In Reading Comprehension In English Language**

**By**

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### **Abstract**

This study was designed to explore the "Gender differences of university graduates in reading comprehension in English language." Following were the objectives of the study i) To explore the impact of reading comprehension of male and female university graduates on academic achievement and ii) To find the impact of reading comprehension on undergraduate students. This research was quantitative and descriptive. The population of this study comprised of 3 universities of Hazara Division. There are 12725 students studying at BS level which constituted the population for proposed study. To gather a sample for the investigation, a multi-stage sampling procedure was used. Two The competency test were used as data collection tool, and scores were collected through data sheet of last semester students at BS level for this research study. There was a test for reading comprehension used in research instrument for study. Collected data was analyzed through regression analysis. The analysis of the study indicate that university students reading comprehension score has significant positive impact on the academic score. The result indicates that Reading Comprehension is a significant contributor for the academic achievement of male university student and insignificant contributor for the academic achievement of female university students. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers may help the students in reading activities like in making interpretation, writing, difficult vocabulary and understanding the narrative. The assistance by teachers may make them confident for striving to understand and comprehend the written text.

**Keywords:** Gender differences, Reading comprehension, University undergraduate students

### **Introduction**

Some people consider the act of reading as a simple task that's easy to master. In reality reading is a complicated process that attracts on various skills. Together, these skills lead and reach to the final goal of reading: reading comprehension, or understanding what's

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been read and interpret. The main areas of how English language is affecting our communications nowadays. In this respect, Galakjani & Sabouri (2016) indicate that to acquire desired data and information and in the era of all over the world that requirements of reading for people to read comprehensively. Similarly, readers who get to achieve the new information and have reading skills for getting knowledge and evaluate the meaning to achieve learners' aims of knowledge. Comprehension and understanding of the text is a must. We know that reading abilities are also based on individual learning capabilities.

The social traits that people typically connect with being male or female are referred to as their gender (Millard, 1997). Different intellectual pursuits, including reading, are frequently influenced by variances in the learner's gender identity. Being male or female-related features are a better indicator of a learner's reading ability or reading motivation. Reading has long been known to be a pastime more frequently performed by women than by men (Millard, 1997).

Differentiations among learners typically serve as indicators of success in learning a second language. One of the elements that fall under the category of "Learners' Differences" is gender. In today's coeducational situations, it is crucial to examine how gender affects language learning, especially since phrases like "boys' underachievement" and "females' verbal superiority" have gained much attention from both L2 instructors and researchers. It implies the need for numerous investigations to identify the source of the issue. One crucial receptive skill in learning a second language is reading.

Through solitary, dyad, triad, small group, and large group exercises, the learners' intellectual and emotional dexterities will also be greatly improved. Different methods and techniques are used to help the pupils acquire the necessary understanding and information. Reading requires concentration and careful thought as readers attempt to extract the main points from the text they have read. More so than ever, understanding is seen as the primary objective of the reading process and readers' primary objective is to comprehend the meaning of the text. Additionally, according to Dawkins (2017), reading proficiency is related to students' academic success. While readers who read often lack reading comprehension skills, those who read attentively and thoroughly tend to do well in practically every topic.

According to a research by Logan and Johnston (2009:200) on the relationship between reading comprehension and gender, girls outperform boys in the subject of English, which is also more frequently taught by women in state comprehensive schools. With more women holding leadership positions across the system, there are presently discussions concerning the feminization of the entire teaching profession. In terms of reading comprehension, girls outperform boys. 2. Boys and girls read at different rates. 3. Girls are more enthusiastic about reading. More academics are attempting to understand why girls have a more positive attitude toward reading than boys. "Perhaps the higher frequency of reading and better reading ability could be an explanation for girls' more positive attitude toward reading," suggest Logan and Johnston (2009). Many experts claim that female students perform better in reading comprehension than male students, although studies that seek to examine the relationship between gender and reading comprehension provide mixed findings: Potential Influences on Reading Comprehension When a reader and a text interact during reading, comprehension is influenced by the factors that control those two, regardless of whether the factors are connected to the reader or the reading text itself. Reading comprehension problems are exceedingly complicated and influenced by a wide range of factors, according to Woolley (2011:15), whether these factors are connected to biological,

cognitive, or behavioral concerns. The three sorts of components that affect reading comprehension are the reader, the text, and the activity (which is a component of the interaction between reader and text) according to Zoghi, Kazemi, and Kalani (2013). All of the reader's skills, expertise, and experiences are discussed. For this reason, Willis (2008: 127) suggests that prior knowledge, personal experiences, and vocabulary are among the variables that influence reading comprehension and serve as crucial components that the reader may employ in his deductive and inductive reasoning and connection-making. Because the text has so many elements, both linguistic and nonlinguistic, including text type, intricacy, and style, discussing the text is also difficult.

While some academics have endeavored to develop solutions for overcoming this gender gap, others have tried to explain why this tendency is taking place (Poole, 2005). Poole (2005) adduces that while the significance of second language reading strategies for enhancing learners' reading comprehension is acknowledged, there is still a knowledge gap regarding how to account for the variations in reading comprehension between males and females. Many interacting processes take place when reading, according to research on the gap between boys and girls' reading comprehension. According to Brantmeier (2004), readers' prior knowledge and life experiences have an impact on how meaning is realized. If relevant schemata are triggered during reading, the reader may be better able to understand the text. Alderson (2000) adds that since readers' knowledge and experiences can vary, so too can the results of their reading. He goes on to say that the reader's gender is a crucial factor in determining reading comprehension, so test creators must take care not to favor one gender over the other when designing assessment assignments. Additionally, according to Brantmeier (2004), there is a difference in reading comprehension between boys and girls even at the earliest levels of language teaching. Seng and Hashim (2006) contend that reading involves the reader, the text, and their engagement with it regardless of whether it is done in a first or second language. However, Hammed (2008) notes that while reading in one's mother tongue shares many crucial fundamental components with reading in a second or foreign language, the effects can differ significantly.

Reading comprehension is a challenge that many students face. When they are reading in English, they have many difficulties about English language in comprehension. They may consider that the main problem in comprehending due to their own lack of ability. The reality is that, there is a problem about their understanding level in presented text. If readers are aware of the types of knowledge and grammatical understanding provided in English texts and are aware of cognitive processes then learners may have a higher degree of comprehension (Mikulecky and Jeffries, 2004).

Decoding, fluency, vocabulary, sentence structure and cohesion, logic and context awareness, and last but not least, working memory and concentration are all essential skills for reading comprehension. When someone try to understand with one of these skills, they can have fully command about understanding what they read. One must explore that how to overcome issue by learning, how to comprehend more effectively by means of evaluating one self.

Reading comprehensive has been given a lot of attention by recent studies in quite revolutionary way in which researchers started to investigate the effect of learners' differences (individual differences) on reading comprehension. Many researchers investigated the relationship between gender and reading comprehension but such studies came up with inconsistent findings which cannot be generalized to all second language

learning contexts. Therefore, the focus of the current study is on exploration of gender differences in reading comprehension in the second language between university males and females students. It also helps to shed light on the generalizations of many studies which concluded that “females always outperforming than males in reading comprehension.

### Objectives

1. To explore the impact of reading comprehension of male and female university graduates on academic achievement.
2. To find the impact of reading comprehension on undergraduate students.

## Methodology

The study was quantitative and survey type methodology was adopted to collect the data related to the components of reading comprehension. The population of this study comprised of 3 universities of Hazara Division. There are 12725 students studying at BS level which constituted the population for proposed study. To gather a sample for the investigation, a multi-stage sampling procedure was used. At first stage, simple random sampling techniques was used for the selection of three public sector universities (University of Haripur, Abbottabad University of science and technology, and Hazara University, Mansehra) in KP. At second stage eight departments (Four natural sciences and four social sciences) were randomly selected. At third stage twenty students were randomly selected from each department. In this way 160 students were selected from each university thus the total sample for the study became 480 students from three universities.

## Data Collection Instrument

The competency test was used as data collection tool, and scores through data sheet of last semester students at BS level for this research study. There was a test for reading comprehension used in research instrument for study. The data from university students was collected through the same test. The test was designed specifically for this research study with consultation of experts and after reviewing the literature about similar data collection instruments. For checking the comprehension level of the students in reading text, competency test was used. There was reading passage based on 4 components of reading used in test.

## Results

**Table 4.1** The impact of reading comprehension of male and female university graduates on academic achievement

Variable	Model 1 B	Model 2	
		B	95% CI
(Constant)	43.8		(30.867, .000)
Male			
Total Reading Comprehension	.561	.161	(2.336, .020)
R Square	.026		
F	5.459		
(Constant)	50.5		(25.625, .000)
Female			

Total Reading Comprehension	.268	.061	(1.005, .316)
R Square	.004		
F	1.010		

Table showed the fitness of the regression model as contributing to male and female student's academic achievement. The value of R- square (.026) indicates 2.6% variation due to Reading Comprehension for male students' and the value of R- square (.004) indicates 0.4 % variation due to Reading Comprehension for female students' academic achievement at the undergraduate level.

The result indicates that the predictors, Reading Comprehension  $B=-.161$ ,  $P=.020>.05$ , is a significant contributor for the academic achievement of male university student and the result indicates that the predictors, Reading Comprehension  $B=.061$ ,  $P=.316>.05$  are insignificant contributor for the academic achievement of female university students.

**Table 4.2** *The impact of reading comprehension on undergraduate students.*

<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Model</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>P</b>
0.038	19.106*	Constant	45.269		
		Reading comprehension		36.658	0.000
		Score	0.754	4.731	0.000

\*Significant at 0.05

Table 4.2 showed that impact of reading comprehension score on students' academic achievement. Value of  $R^2=0.038$  showed that this model produces a variation of 3.8% in dependent variable furthermore that statistical value ( $B=0.754$ ,  $t=4.731$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) indicate that university students reading comprehension score has significant positive impact on the academic score.

## Conclusion And Discussion

The focus of this study was to examine the impact of reading comprehension on academic achievement of university students in Hazara division. The following are some of the study's findings:

### *Discussion regarding to the impact of reading comprehension on university students' academic achievement*

This study revealed that there is positive impact of reading comprehension on university students' academic achievement. These findings relate with the findings of study by Bastug (2014) who found that the reading comprehension significantly expected academic achievement. The finding of this study also in line with the finding of Ates (2008), Bloom (1998), Grimm (2008), Lerkkanen et al (2005), Demagistri, Richards and Canet (2009), Villa( 2008) and Ceyhan, and Yıldız (2021). Bharuthram ( 2012) argues that reading is one of the most important academic tasks undertaken by students and emphasizes that reading is essence of formal education. Written materials such as textbooks and journals are among the



most important learning sources in schools (Tasdemir, 2010). Most learning takes place by reading and comprehending of such sources. Reading and learning out of such materials are associated with students' academic achievement (Tasdemir, 2010). Therefore, higher academic achievement requires students to read efficiently and construct meaning on the basis of reading. Miller, Kargin, and Guldenoglu (2013) point out that reading comprehension affects students' academic achievement and is a prerequisite for a number of academic skills. A lack of reading comprehension adversely affects students' academic performance (Bharuthram, 2012; Bohlman & Pretorius, 2002; Meneghetti, Carretti, & De Beni, 2006; Pretorius, 2002).

### ***Discussion regarding to the impact of reading comprehensive skill on academic achievement of male and female students at university level***

The results show about the impact of reading skills on academic achievement of male and female students at university level that male students have significant contributor than female students. These findings are not supported by the findings of study by Dauyah and Purnama (2017) who found that female students' score was higher than male students' scores. The findings of the study by Anantasa (2016) also contradict with this study who found that 25% of boys' participants get high score in reading comprehension test and 33% girls' participants get high score in reading comprehension test. The possible reason for this contradiction may be due to the female students lack in paying attention and students may not comprehend the gist of text.

The results reveal that there exists a significance difference between the reading comprehension score of male and female students. The study indicates that female students at university level are significantly better in reading comprehension than the male students. These findings are in line with the findings of Arellano (2013) who found that female students achieved better results than their male students. Similar results of Sari, Rosmalina and Erlina (2019) found that girls were got high score in reading comprehension test than boys. Different results shown by the study of Oda and Kadhim (2017) that there was no statistically significant differences gender on their levels of reading comprehension. The findings of Asgarabadi, Rouhi and Jafarigozar (2015) also shown the different results there was no statistically significant difference between male and female students' reading comprehension.

## **Recommendations**

Findings of current study show that reading comprehensive skill was found above the average level in university students. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers may help the students in reading activities like in making interpretation, writing, difficult vocabulary and understanding the narrative. The assistance by teachers may make them confident for striving to understand and comprehend the written text. Findings of the study indicated that positive impact of reading comprehension was found on university students' academic achievement. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers may guide the students through focused, high-quality discussion on meaning of the text. It may clear their concepts and impact positively on their GPA. Findings of the study indicated that impact of reading skill on gender was found that male students got high score in reading skills and academic achievement than female students. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers may give more tasks i.e. assignments, presentations, reading tasks to the female students, it would be better for their reading skill and getting high scores in academic achievement.

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