

Saudi College Students' Arabic & English Reading Attitudes

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Abstract

The study examined Saudi college students' Arabic and English reading attitudes and considered the influence of gender on reading attitudes. A correlational quantitative approach was used to study 115 participants' reading attitudes in both languages. Participants displayed uncertain attitudes toward Arabic reading practice, and more positive attitudes towards English reading. Females demonstrated more positive attitudes towards reading practice in both languages than males. Females' social communities had less positive reading attitudes toward Arabic and English reading than males' social communities. In the absence of family encouragement to practice pleasure reading at homes, students did not read widely. Siblings', friends', and peers' choice of books highly influenced participants' choices of reading materials. Study participants reported that Saudi schools, especially males' schools, did not profoundly impact on their reading attitudes. Pleasure reading was not encouraged. Neither were students taught how to find books that suited their interests or encouraged to spend time in the schools' library.

Keywords: Saudi Arabic, English reading, attitude, enjoy, females and males differences

1. Introduction

Reading is an essential skill for language learning. Studies demonstrate a strong connection between learners' attitudes and a successful learning process. A positive attitude is associated with successful learning, while negative emotions hinder learning (Lambert, 1972). Alexander and Filler (1975) defined reading attitude as "a system of feelings related to reading which causes the learner to approach or avoid a reading situation" (p. 1). Clark and Rumbold (2006) state, "when struggling readers are not motivated to read, their opportunities to learn decrease significantly (e.g., Baker et al., 2000)." The absence of motivation to read can lead to strong negative feelings about reading and create a cycle circle in which poor readers stay poor readers (Juel, 1988). Even though there is considerable agreement about the impact of reading attitudes on learning and achievement (Morgan, 1993; Phuong & Vo, 2019; Murtafi'ah & Putro, 2020), some studies (McKenna et al., 2012) indicate that reading attitude decrease when readers grow up, i.e., when they are in high school or college, and impacts their reading achievements (Petscher, 2010; Woolly, 2011).

With recent advancement in technology, undergraduate students spend most of their leisure time surfing the internet, watching television, or on social media rather than on practicing reading (Florence et al., 2017). The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) found that in 1989 and 2008, 59.8% and 51.7% of third level learners were book readers (National Endowment for the Arts, 2007). The change in reading attitude, possibly due to the influence of technology, pushed educators to find more about their students' attitude to assist them in becoming successful readers.

Moreover, gender has an impact on all an individual's daily activities and abilities (Bećirović, 2017). Many studies highlight the relationship between gender and individual abilities (Woolfolk, 2014). Similarly, the connection between an individual's gender, age and reading habits has been established (Florence et al., 2017). Traditionally, gender is used as an essential analytical factor in education and psychology (Catalan, 2003). Thus, gender ought to be used as an independent variable in studying foreign language (Amri, Fauzi, Zaid, & Mee, 2021).

Today, there is a remarkable shift in attitudes towards learning English in Saudi Arabia (Mohammed, 2015). Limited research has been conducted on Saudi reading attitudes especially research studies that evaluate the influence of gender on reading attitudes. Studying Saudi reading attitudes would assist educators understand the local literacy situation. Very few studies have assessed the influence of social factors and gender on Saudi reading attitude (Daif-Allah, & Aljumah, 2020). Also, research studies on Saudi reading attitude rarely examine the relationship between first language (Arabic) and foreign language (English) reading attitudes, but they focused on the attitude of learning English as a foreign language. Therefore, the primary goal of this study is to determine Saudi college students Arabic and English reading attitudes in view of their social relational influences such as siblings, friends, classmates, and their gender.

2. Literature Review

Various researchers have attempted to define reading "attitudes." One definition has a direct link to reading practice: Smith (1990, p. 215) described reading attitude as "a state of mind, accompanied by feelings and emotions, that makes reading more or less probable." It is important to distinguish between attitude and motivation in order to be aware of their difference in discussing Saudi reading attitude.

Attitude is a set of beliefs whereas motivation is a reason or reasons for doing something (Oroujlou & Vahedi, 2011).

The term ‘attitude’ is more complex than the feelings or emotions expressed towards something e.g., reading. For example, Allport (1954, p. 45) defines attitude as “a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual’s response toward all objects and situations with which it is related.” Ajzan (1988, p. 4) defines attitude as the “disposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to an object, person, institution, or event.” Thus, attitude is a psychological reaction to an object, subject, or project that affects human behavior. Alternatively, attitude is an assessment reaction based on an individual’s beliefs and opinions towards a specific issue (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Consequently, “A relevant aspect of attitude derived from these definitions is that attitudes – such as L2 reading attitudes – can be acquired from and shaped by past experiences – such as L1 reading attitudes” (Cancino & Ubilla, 2021, p.466).

Morgan’s (1993) reemphasized the role of positive emotions in learning foreign language and culture. Grabe and Stoller (2013) agree that negative reading attitude towards a native language may influence second or foreign language reading attitude. Studies that explored the transfer of affective factors (such as attitude, habit, and motivation) between L1 and EFL have established the association between L1 reading attitude and learning EFL (Yamashita, 2007; Day & Bamford, 1998). The relationship between L1 and L2 reading attitude is essential in specific learning contexts: we cannot generalize reading attitude of a specific educational and sociocultural context to other learning contexts (Wood & Gabas, 2017; Yamashita, 2013).

3. Arabic Reading Attitudes

Compared to Western literacy studies, a limited number of studies have focused on Arab literacy practice attitudes, specifically Saudi Arabic reading practice attitudes and how major social factors influencing reading practice. Although most Arabic reading attitude studies have examined the non-Arabic bilingual context where Arabic is taught as a second language, some studies have assessed Arabic reading attitudes in an Arabic context. Alammari (2009) illustrated no change in Saudi students’ attitudes towards Arabic reading before and after studying English. Murad (2007) examined attitudes toward standard Arabic and Iraqi Arabic among 200 Iraqi students of different education levels and gender and found a significant relationship between education level or gender and the attitude toward using standard Arabic. Gender factor played a significant role in reading attitude of Iraqi students and the study indicated that students who had attained higher education levels preferred standard Arabic to Iraqi Arabic and vice versa. However, the study did not illustrate major gender difference between participants’ attitudes.

Dhafiri (1998), who examined the impact of teaching English at primary schools in Kuwait on the standard Arabic reading attitude, found that learning English negatively impacted all students’ Arabic reading performance. Haeri (2009, p. 423) demonstrated that Egyptians found “the language of books too difficult and it takes them too long to read just a few pages.” Arabs with negative attitudes towards reading have poor reading practices. The average person in Europe reads 35 books each year, whereas the equivalent of 1 book is read by every 80 Arabs over the same period (Al-Mahrooqi and Denman, 2018).

Arab or Saudi students rarely read independently (Bendriess and Golkowska, 2011; Rajab and Al-Sadi, 2015). Consequently, young Saudis may dislike reading and young Arabs may have a negative attitude towards Arabic reading practice. Saudis who are poor Arabic readers will remain poor readers if they maintain such a negative attitudes towards reading Arabic. This study evaluated Saudi’s Arabic and English reading attitudes with a focus on gender differences and social influences on reading attitude.

4. English Reading Attitudes

As regards English reading, research studies have not extensively examined Arab EFL (English foreign language) reading attitudes towards learning a foreign language, especially in the Gulf States. A couple of studies examined Arab and gulf EFL students’ attitude toward learning English language and found that learners had positive attitudes towards learning English (Malallah, 2000; Qashoa, 2006; Al-Tamimi and Shuib, 2009). An effective research study in Arab EFL attitudes carried out by Shaaban and Ghaith (2003) examined Lebanese learners’ motivations for learning Arabic, French, and English. Lebanese college students considered English and French more beneficial for their future careers compared to Arabic (their mother tongue). English and French languages assisted Lebanese students in coping with the modern world and discovering new science and technology highlighting the value of these two languages for business and communication purposes. Therefore, learners’ positive attitudes can have a profound impact on English language learning.

On the Saudi side, a study undertaken by Alsamaani (2012) confirmed that Saudi EFL university students possess positive attitudes towards and beliefs about learning English. Al Asmari (2013) found that Saudi learners had strong positive attitudes towards both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for learning English in his study of 176 Saudi undergraduate EFL learners at the English Language Center in Taif University in Saudi Arabia. Kassem (2013) compared the attitudes and beliefs about learning English of Saudi EFL college students who were English majors to administration majors. Saudi EFL learners who were English majors held more positive attitudes and strong beliefs about learning English than administration majors. In a study of 112 Saudi EFL university students from Umm Al-Qura University, Saudi EFL learners had positive attitudes towards learning English, especially those with high GPAs who were more motivated to learn, than those with intermediate or low GPAs (Al Samadani and Ibnian (2015). Hence Saudi EFL hold a positive attitude toward learning English.

But some Arab and gulf students expressed a negative attitude towards English learning (Al-Mutawa’s, 1994; Abu-Melhim, 2009). Additionally, Saudi EFL learners in intermediate or secondary school were demotivated to learn English. Students held more positive attitudes towards English before studying the language than after studying it. Therefore, Saudi English teachers ought to employ advanced

technology and new teaching approaches to motivate their learners (Almairan, 2005; Liton, 2012; Seghayer, 2014). Hence, studying Saudi learners' attitudes toward English facilitates understanding their comprehension processes and strategies. If EFL learners hold negative attitudes towards a target language, they will struggle reading the target language.

Furthermore, Arabs' social circles and connections have a profound influence on their English reading attitude since the Arabic community is a collective society. Family members, relatives, or friends may encourage or discourage English readers from practicing reading (Liton, 2012; Al-Seghayer, 2014). Ruterana's (2012, p. 19) perspective on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory discusses "the attitudes, manners or habits shared by a given group of people in order to achieve common goals"; a concept considered by the current study. The sociocultural theory, especially the scaffolding perspective which emphasizes the influence of social and peers' interactions and attitudes on learning, has been considered in studying Saudi reading practice attitude. Most of the social influence on reading attitudes stems from family and friends. For example, Al-Seghayer (2014) pointed out that Saudi EFL learners hold negative beliefs about learning English. Saudi negative beliefs are related to many internal and external factors, including how they perceive the English language. Saudi EFL learners' personal experiences and expectations helped create these negative beliefs. If these three entities (family, relatives, and friends) indeed worked together, they would have a positive impact on the reading attitudes of different generations. Therefore, the influence of family, relatives, and friends' reading attitudes must be considered in understanding Saudi reading attitude.

5. Gender Difference in Reading Attitude

Gender is a basic biological categorization of human beings which defines a person's social identity as male or female. Gender has a significant impact on second or foreign language learning. Various attributes including gender, age and language proficiency have been widely investigated in L1 and L2 reading attitude studies (Worrell et al, 2006; Yamashita, 2004, 2007). A considerable number of previous research studies indicate that female students' reading attitudes tend to outweigh that of male students (e.g., Smith, 1990; McKenna et al., 1995; 2012; Ghaith, 2003; Logan & Johnston, 2009; Aldosari, 2014; Bussert-Web & Zhang, 2016). Hence, there is a strong relationship between a person's gender and the language learning process.

Worrell et al (2006) examined gender differences in reading attitude among academically talented students and found that female students had more positive attitudes towards reading than male students; a generalizable outcome. Aldosari (2014) found that female students had better attitudes towards EFL learning than male students in his study of 50 university students. Murtafi'ah & Putro (2020) also demonstrated similar results among females as regards both academic and recreational reading.

But gender differences in reading attitude do not apply to all cultures. Saudi social influences significantly influence gender roles because Saudi males take care of responsibilities outside the home in workplaces, markets, and streets and have more chances to socially interact whereas female Saudis cater to duties inside the house; therefore female Saudis may have more time to do their homework and practice reading (Al Harthy, 2017; Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2018). This study set out to determine Saudi college students' Arabic and English reading attitudes by considering social relational influences such as the influence of siblings, friends, and classmates as well as the effect of gender on reading attitudes.

6. Study Methodology

Mixed research methods, a survey and an interview, were used to investigate Saudi Arabic and English reading attitude. The study adopted the Elementary Reading Attitudes Survey (ERAS) (established by McKenna & Kear, 1990; McKenna et al., 1995) to shed a light on Saudi reading attitudes in both first language (Arabic) and foreign language (English) in context of their gender and social connections. Two independent variables (gender and social factors) were used to elicit L1 and L2 reading attitudes of 112 Saudi participants. The researcher also conducted qualitative mini scale-interviews (15 participants) to comprehend social attitudinal problems encountered by Saudi readers regarding reading.

The (ERAS) was chosen because its twenty (20) survey items were in alignment with the study's primary goal. Minor changes were made to ERAS. Firstly, ERAS was created for children in elementary or middle school. Therefore, some survey items that were redundant (e.g., how do you feel about school reading? how do you feel about reading in school? How do you feel about reading a loud in school?) were excluded. Secondly, the study attitude questions scale in ERAS that appears as images was altered to elicit more direct answers. For instance, ERAs responses to how participants felt about reading were revised to really fun, fun, okay, no fun, and no really fun, to assist survey participants in stating their precise feelings about reading practice. Thirdly, the current study went a step further to examine the gender differences in reading attitude in Arabic or English considering the possible influence of environmental and social factors (e.g. how do your parents feel when they see you practice reading? How does your family feel about visiting or spending some time in the bookstore? How do your relatives, friends or peers feel about spending free time on reading? etc.). One distinctive factor about the Saudi culture in the Arab world is its collective culture. Hence, parents, siblings, relatives or friends may play an important role in forming Saudi reading practice attitudes. Therefore, survey items investigating the impact of home, family, and community were included in the study questionnaire.

A set of questionnaire statements (23 items) were established to describe readers' current attitudes towards reading practice in both languages (Arabic and English). Initially, study participants were asked to provide some background information (e.g., their gender, educational level, and economic status). In this study, the researcher selected 15 items from the McKenna & Kear (1990) and McKenna et al. (1995) survey to not only examine Saudi reading attitudes in both Arabic and English, but to also highlight the major differences in Saudi reading attitudes between the two languages. The other five items were concerned with the influence of the family, home, community, and places of reading, on reading attitudes.

Table 1. Reading Attitude Item Reliability

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items.
.700	.705	23

A Likert questionnaire scale (on a scale of really fun, fun, okay, no fun, no really fun) was used to extract more direct responses from participants. SPSS 25 was used to assess the reliability of questionnaire responses. The reading attitude reliability score was 700 shown in Table I is considered a high reliability score (Vaske, Beaman, & Sponarski, 2017).

The study investigated the correlation between Saudis reading attitudes in Arabic or English as independent variables and the dependent variable "I enjoy reading Arabic or English books." Study results were divided into three sections to comprehend the study outcome better: Saudi Arabic reading attitude, Saudi English reading attitude, and overall Saudi reading attitudes towards both Arabic and English.

Correlational analyses were used to analyze quantitative data. Hasan's (2013) of correlational intensity level which is described as very strong (0,81 – 1,00); strong (0,61 – 0,80); moderate (0,41 – 0,60); weak (0,21 – 0,40) and very weak (0,00 – 0,20) was used to define the correlational intensity level of study participants' reading attitude responses. Percentages were used as a supplement to provide a more insightful view of the Saudi reading attitude.

7. Interviews

Semi structured interviews were used to elicit information from five participants. Initially, the interviewer and interviewee got to know each other before the interviewer explained the research topic and invited the interviewee to participate. Open-ended questions including, "Speak about how your family support reading and readers," "Do you like to speak about what you read have to your family or friends? If yes, why? If no, why?" were posed in no specific order to give participants the freedom to express themselves. The interview set up was akin to an informal chat because Saudis could be apprehensive when asked to respond to formal direct questions.

The interviews were transcribed verbatim in Arabic by Atlas, a program that is designed to assist researchers in transcribing Arabic interviews. Poland (1995) described verbatim audio transcription software as providing a word-for-word reproduction of verbal recording data. Written words are replicated from an audio recording to capture not only meanings and perceptions of recordings but also the context in which the recordings occurred. Transcribed interviews were double checked before translation into English. The translated scripts were also double checked by two translation professors at Qassim University.

8. Participants

There were 112 participants who completed the study questionnaire: 57 were male. Five of the 15 participants who completed the questionnaire and consented to an interview were randomly selected to participate in an interview. The 5 were all male to comply with social and Saudi civil law. A man can only converse with a female if they have kinship relation.

Table 2. Interview participants

Pseudonym	Age in years	Education Level	University Major	Interview Length in minutes
Salem	21	First year of college	Computer science	7.22
Saleh	24	Graduate student	English language	8.22
Mohammed	22	Graduate college student	Electronic engineering	6.55
Eaid	21	First year college student	Pharmacy	8.10
Turkeye	23	Third year college student	English language	7.08

Four interview participants were college students but one was pursuing a graduate degree. Participants diverse academic and regional (east, west, south, and central parts of the kingdom) backgrounds facilitated the observation of a variety of reading practices.

9. Recruitment

With the advancement of social media communication, it is more convenient to communicate with many people at once by clicking on "send." Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, Skype, etc., have established an easy communication channel among different communities. Therefore, this study used social media tools to distribute the study survey link to all Saudi participants.

The researcher contacted his colleagues, friends, and students to help distribute the study survey link to more potential participants. Data collection, especially the ESL data, went on for four weeks since most Saudi youth used social media for entertainment or sports news rather than to read or participate in surveys.

10. Study Results

10.1 Saudi Arabic Reading Attitudes

Table III presents a descriptive analysis of Saudi Arabic females' and males' reading attitudes. Understanding participants' perception of reading importance before examining their reading motivation is essential as reading perceptions may influence their reading attitudes. Saudi participants acknowledged the significance of being a good Arabic reader in their lives ($SD=0.81$). The result reflects a noticeable agreement on the importance of being a good Arabic reader. There were minor variations in the statistical results ($SD=0.81$) and relatively low mean or average scores ($M=1.77$) indicating that most of the responses were concentrated on two answers. There were no noticeable

gender differences in responses to this question. On the other hand, there were gender differences in responses to how Saudi families perceive the significance of Arabic reading. Saudi males were more open to speak about their families' consideration of reading practice (SD=0.96) than Saudi females (SD=0.87).

Table 3. Saudi Arabic Reading Attitude

Questionnaire Item	N	Mean Females	Mean Males	Standard Deviation Females	Standard Deviation Males
How significant is being a good Arabic reader in your life?	112	1.70	1.77	0.81	0.80
Is Arabic reading important to your family?	112	2.30	2.12	0.87	0.96
How do you find Arabic reading?	112	1.83	1.62	0.79	0.68
Do you enjoy practicing Arabic reading in home?	112	3.33	3.39	1.29	1.02
How do you feel about reading a book during your school free time?	112	2.80	3.01	0.87	0.83
How do you feel about getting an Arabic book as a gift?	112	1.93	1.94	0.93	0.87
How do you feel about spending your free time in Arabic reading?	112	2.80	3.01	0.87	0.83
How do you feel about spending time in Arabic library?	112	2.35	2.58	0.99	0.91
How do you feel when your teacher asks about what you have read in Arabic?	112	2.13	2.16	0.89	0.87
Do your friends or relatives like Arabic reading?	112	2.68	3.10	0.75	0.85
My reading teacher makes reading a fun activity.	112	3.88	3.46	1.36	1.53
I tell my family or friends about good Arabic reading books	112	3.03	3.01	0.79	0.87
I have my favorite Arabic reading book in home	112	2.55	2.67	0.91	1.00

Saudi females enjoyed Arabic reading (SD= 0.79) more than males who had a less deviated statistical outcome (SD= 0.68). Overall, almost all participants somewhat liked to read in Arabic, but they were not motivated to continue reading in Arabic. Additionally, the responses to the question about enjoying Arabic at home agrees with previous statistical outcomes. Females expressed more positive attitudes to practice Arabic reading at home than males (study table III). However, there were wide variations in response to the question ‘how do you feel about spending your free time reading’ from Saudi females (SD= 0.87); a response that concurs with participants' responses to their attitudes to reading Arabic books during their free time at school. Males responses when asked about free reading (Table III) were less deviated (SD= 0.83) from the mean, while their mean or average score was comparatively high (M= 3.01). Free Arabic reading, therefore, is not practiced by Saudis as seen in distribution of responses. Only 31% of the participants expressed their preference for spending most of their free time in Arabic reading, while 68% spent little or none of their free time in Arabic reading. Thus Saudis do not hold positive attitudes toward Arabic reading. Saudi female participants held more positive attitudes about pleasure reading during their free time.

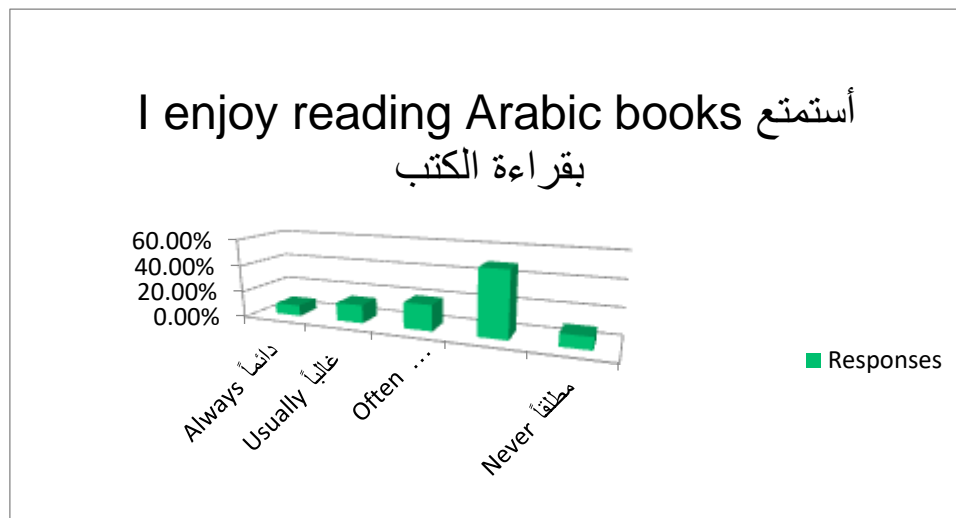


Chart 1

Moreover, gender had an influence on reading attitudes because Saudi females and their friends preferred practicing Arabic reading more than Saudi males and their friends. Chart 2 shows that Saudi females' friends enjoyed reading more than their male friends. The social community therefore has a profound influence on reading practice. Saudi Arabia still has a gender-based education system which affects social connections. Boys are friends with other boys, and girls are friends with other girls. The two genders do not mix prompting the researcher to evaluate gender differences in Arabic reading attitudes.

Even though half of the participants indicated having negative attitudes towards Arabic reading, they were also more likely to dislike places where they could obtain books. Males disliked spending time at an Arabic library (SD= 0.91) more than females (SD= 0.99). Few

participants truly loved spending time at the library (see interview 1). Only one participants did not have a library in his or her childhood school, while the rest had a library in their schools. However, three out of five study interviewees rarely visited their school libraries. Visits to the library were not part of Saudi students’ daily or weekly school routines. One of the interviewees pointed out that they mostly visited the library when the reading teacher was absent, or they had free class time with nothing to do. Moreover, females liked visiting the library more than outweigh males.

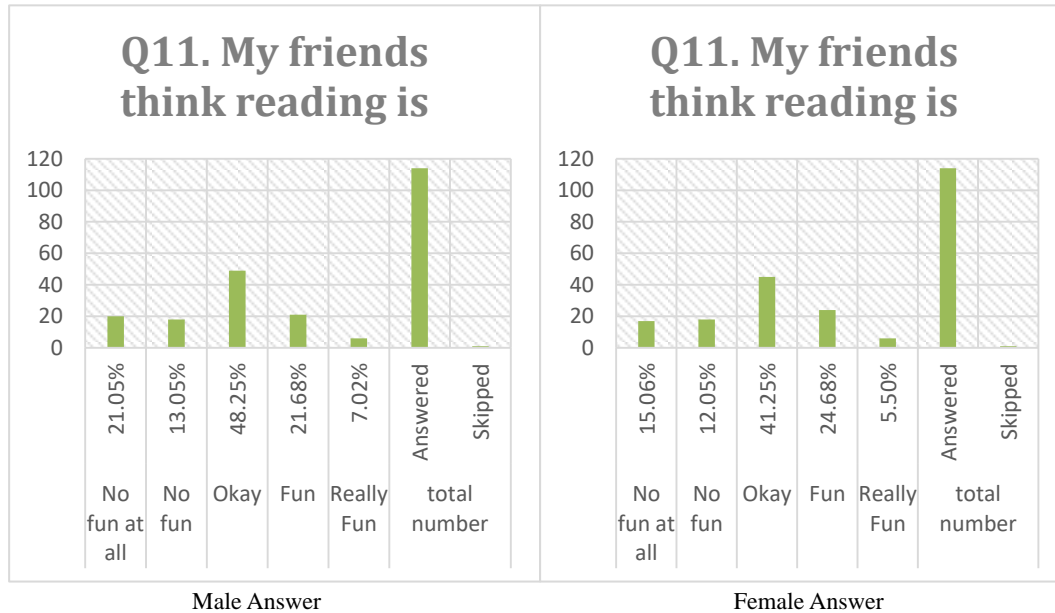


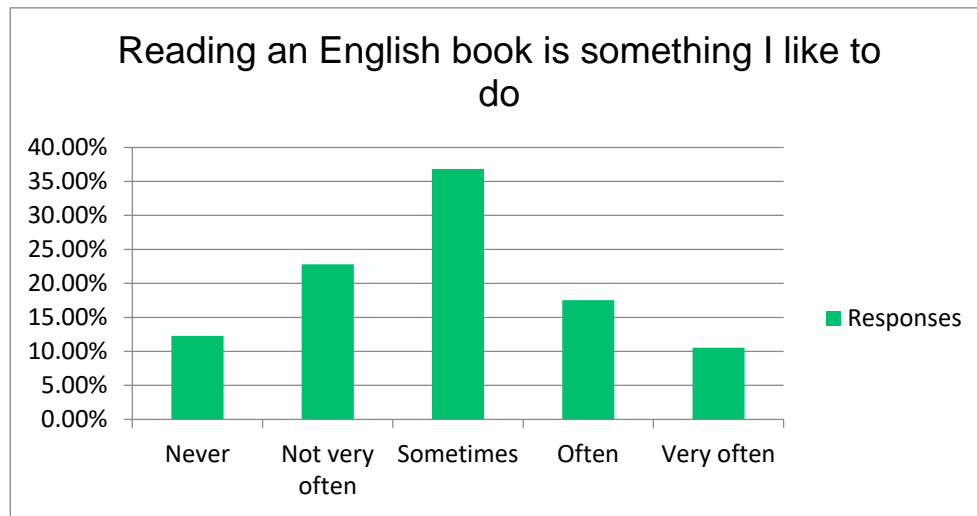
Chart 2

Arabic reading for enjoyment is not popular in Saudi families’ daily routines. It is uncommon to have personal libraries in Saudi homes due to a lack of interest in sharing reading knowledge with other family members. Only one of the interviewees indicated having a home library with books that could be read by the whole family. Most interviewees just had a couple of books they kept near their beds. Furthermore, just one of the interviewees mentioned discussing what they read at home family meetings. The Saudi society is a collective society where social connections play a crucial role in the lives of citizens and influence their daily lives. This means Saudis friends’ or relatives’ attitude toward reading may affect their reading attitude. The study statistical outcome is (SD= 0.85) which shows that relatives’ or close friends’ held negative Arabic reading practice attitudes while females’ friends or relatives shows less negative attitude towards Arabic reading. Therefore, social positive reading attitudes are not common among community members.

Females were less motivated to tell their friends about good Arabic books (SD= 0.79) than males (SD= 0.87); a finding that conflicts previous outcomes on Arabic reading attitude where females had more positive attitudes. This means that social chatting about books is not common in Saudi society pointing to the fact Saudis do not enjoy reading. Last, the highest deviation in Saudis Arabic reading attitude was found in their response whether their reading teachers made the reading enjoyable. Males had more varied results (SD= 1.53) than females (SD= 1.36). But similar scores suggest that both females and males to some extent felt that their reading teachers did not make the reading process enjoyable. Similar answers were given regarding reading teachers’ questions about private reading.

In summary, Saudi people held negative attitudes toward Arabic reading practice. Although over 80% of them recognized the importance of reading practice, less than 15% of m study participants expressed their ultimate enjoyment in Arabic reading. Saudis expressed uncertainty about their feelings towards Arabic reading practice, implying their unfamiliarity with reading practice. The home as well as the social Arabic reading literacy practice is an uncommon activity among Saudis; only 22 study participants indicated sharing or discussing reading materials with their families or friends. Based on this fact, Saudi parents do not read at in Saudi homes. Home libraries are also not popular in the Saudi society because less than 10% of participants had their favorite Arabic books at home.

10.2 Saudi English Reading Attitudes



Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.00	5.00	3.00	2.84	1.13

Chart 3

Generally, interview participants reported positive feelings towards practicing reading in the English language. The average participant score regarding Saudi English reading practice attitudes was not high (M= 2.84) and there was a wide variation in scores (SD=1.13) as shown in Chart 3.

Saudi females EFL readers acknowledgment of the significance of English reading over Arabic reading (SD= 0.90) exceeded that of male Saudis (SD= 0.78). However, when participants were asked about the importance of English reading to their family, there was no gender difference in participants' scores (FSD= 0.92; MSD= 0.90).

Table 4. Saudi English Reading Attitude

Questionnaire Item	N	Mean score	Mean score	Standard Deviation	Standard Deviation
		Females	Males		Females
How significant is being a good English reader where your live?	112	3.23	3.29	0.90	0.78
How important is reading English texts to your family?	112	2.11	2.43	0.92	0.90
How do you find reading English texts?	112	2.81	2.91	0.87	0.69
Do you enjoy reading English texts at home?	112	2.91	2.90	1.20	1.12
How do you feel about reading a book during your free time?	112	2.20	2.33	0.98	0.73
How do you feel about receiving an English book as a gift?	112	3.03	2.99	0.97	0.92
How do you feel about spending your free time reading English texts?	112	2.30	2.42	0.95	0.70
How do you feel about spending time in an Arabic library?	112	2.63	2.49	0.96	0.88
How do you feel when your teacher asks you about what you have read in English?	112	2.71	2.66	1.16	0.95
Do your friends or relatives like reading English texts?	112	2.91	2.79	1.08	1.20
My reading teacher makes reading a fun activity	112	3.88	3.46	1.36	1.53
I tell my family or friends about good English books	112	2.20	2.35	0.98	0.94
I have my favorite English book in home	112	2.19	2.67	1.04	1.07

Based on the results shown in table III, Saudi females found English easier than Saudi males. The females English reading practice score (SD= 1.20) surpassed that of males (SD= 1.12). Generally, females displayed more positive attitudes towards English reading than males. However, males stated that their friends supported English reading and displayed more positive motives towards reading than females' friends. Females held more positive attitudes towards receiving a book as a gift. Salem, an interview participant, spontaneously expressed his hesitation to give an English book to another man or his friend but stated that he would certainly gift his sister a book. Salem's preference had nothing to do with his sister's attitudes toward English reading. Gifting an English book to a Saudi woman metaphorically implies that the receiver is an educated person because knowledge of the English language in the Saudi community denotes a prestigious status.

There was no correlation between participants' positive motivations and English reading practice; four out of five interview participants stated that they read Arabic texts for pleasure and English texts to learn the language. Linguistic, lexical, and reading strategies play a profound role in determining whether Saudis will pursue English reading. According to a study interview (6), the participant elaborated the type of obstacles encountered by Saudi students when practicing English reading and justified preferring reading Arabic texts to English

texts for pleasure reading. Eaid, one of the interview participants, distinguished between the English Arabic reading practices' intentions. Second or foreign language learners' motivations or attitudes are always influenced by the linguistic and lexical obstacles a learner is faced with when learning the new language. An individual's interests can make English reading practice a more enjoyable process because the topics in a reading text determine its vocabulary and lexicon. If the EFL learner has an interest in a topic, s/he will familiarize themselves with the vocabulary like Turkey (interview participant), who liked to read English biographies. Otherwise, encountering unfamiliar vocabulary while reading can demotivate readers including EFL learners.

Saudi School reading teachers' have not profoundly impacted their students' reading attitude where males displayed a less statistical outcome in describing their school reading teachers effort in motivating them to read. Additionally, an individual's intentions when reading a text (pleasure or learning), can influence his or her reading attitudes and reading motivations. Practicing Arabic reading is done either as part of the school curricula or for pleasure, but practicing English reading is meant to serve more purposes. Participants practiced English reading for language acquisition wherein the reading context had to match the reader's language level. English reading practice was also done to communicate relevant topics as observed in Eaid's process of choosing his English reading texts. Eaid's distinction between Arabic reading practice and English reading also sheds light on how readers process these two languages (Arabic and English). Saudi EFL learners spend more time and effort reading English texts than they do Arabic texts. Most of the English reading books chosen by EFL or ESL students are designed to cater for them, whereas they would select a wide variety of Arabic reading books.

Surprising responses were given by Saudi EFL learners when asked how much they liked English reading (see table III) compared to Arabic reading (see table II). Despite minor differences in scores, more participants often or very often liked to read English books (19 of 109) than often or very often liked to read Arabic books (9 of 109 participants) implying that Saudis liked English reading practice more than Arabic reading practice. Participants' awareness of their need for acquiring English language skills may influence their responses to their attitudes towards English reading practice.

As regards participants' attitudes towards spending time in English libraries, Saudi females score outweighed that of males (See table III). More respondents thought that English libraries were an interesting place to spend time in than Arabic libraries. Only 19.27% of the participants were interested in spending time in an Arabic library. The preference for spending time in English libraries to Arabic libraries emanates from a limited number of English libraries in Saudi cities. It is difficult to find an English library or a bookstore with an English book section in some Saudi cities. Thus, people may be more interested in scarce or newfound things such as English libraries. The rarity of English book libraries may make them more attractive than to Saudis Arabic libraries.

EFL learners expressed similar feelings about English reading practice and Arabic reading practice regardless of their gender or education level. Study participants' who selected the response 'sometimes' indicated uncertainty in their attitudes towards reading practice. Although some participants practiced Arabic reading for pleasure, none of them practiced English reading for pleasure. Therefore, EFL learners, especially males, prefer Arabic reading to English reading due to the language barriers associated with English reading practice. Saudis rarely practice reading in both languages suggesting that they do not enjoy reading.

10.3 Overall Saudi Reading Attitudes towards both English & Arabic

Response to the question about Saudi reading attitudes in both languages gives a broader picture of Saudis' reading attitudes. The multiple regression analysis method enabled researchers to explore the relationship between several dependent variables and Saudi reading attitudes in both languages (i.e., responses to the question 'I enjoy reading Arabic or English books').

Table 5. Multiple Regression Analysis illustrating the relationship between participants' responses and overall Saudi Reading Attitude (Arabic & English)

Coefficients		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta			Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.382	0.41		3.371	0.001					
) I tell my friends about the names of good reading books) أخبر اصدقائي عن الكتب الجيدة	0.667	0.131	0.572	5.081	0	0.572	0.572	0.572	1	1
2	(Constant)	1.012	0.423		2.39	0.02					
) I talk about good books with my friends) مع اصدقائي عن الكتب الجيدة	0.465	0.152	0.399	3.06	0.003	0.572	0.391	0.331	0.685	1.459
	(I added some books to my home library) أضفت بعض الكتب لمكتبة منزلي	0.403	0.171	0.308	2.362	0.022	0.532	0.311	0.255	0.685	1.459
Dependent Variable: I enjoy reading Arabic or English books											

Responses to the question "I enjoy reading practice" have a direct connection to reading attitudes. Juxtaposing this variable to other study

variables identifies the most influential factors on Saudi reading attitudes in both languages (Arabic, English).

If participants told their friends about the names of good books, they were more likely to have enjoyed reading it implying that Saudis commonly converse about reading books. The more they liked to read, the more likely they were to tell others about the specific book they read. Saudi's value engaging in general conversations with friends or family members because they regularly talk about reading books in their daily or weekly meetings.

Speaking about reading ranked second most among factors that influenced English and Arabic reading attitudes. Saudis were likely to speak about the book they had read during social dialogues including their feelings about a books' main ideas, writing genre, writing style and so on, as described Saleh and Turkey. As a result, Saudis' choice of reading materials is consciously or unconsciously affected by their friends' reading book choices confirming that most Saudi reading choices are influenced by their social connections. Social reading trends or friends' reading interests determined most Saudi readers' reading interest. Although most Saudi readers may believe that they are making independent reading choices when selecting a reading book, individual preferences for reading materials are the exception rather than the norm.

'Adding a book to the home library' was the third most impactful factor that influenced both languages' reading attitudes. When readers are motivated to mention the names of good books to their friends and talk about these books, they are more likely to add them to their libraries. The absence of new books in the home library indicates that Saudis do not talk about reading. Hence, readers are eager to add books to their library because they talk about them during social meeting interactions.

Based on the multiple regression analysis of participants' responses, Saudis' reading practice is a social process more than an individual process. Mentioning the names of good books, talking about good books, and adding books to a personal library, are all directly connected to social chatting or communication. Reading attitudes are also influenced by social connections; when a reader tells his or her friends about a book, his or her friends may read that book out of curiosity. Therefore, readers' attitudes are influenced by the first reader's attitude towards a text. Thus, Saudi reading attitudes, either negative or positive, are transferred from and to, and influenced by close friends or family members' social connections.

11. Discussion

Based on this study's findings, as well as from the findings of previous researchers (Bendriss & Golkowska, 2011; Dhafiri, 1998; Haeri, 2009), most Arabs have a negative attitude towards Arabic reading and learning. Additionally, concurrent with Bendriss and Golkowska (2011) who revealed that Qatari students disliked pleasure reading, and Rajab and Al-Sadi (2015) who found that very few Saudi students finished reading a book, Saudis may not state they have a negative attitude toward Arabic reading, but they do not practice Arabic reading, and very few of them finish reading a book.

It is possible that the negative attitudes towards Arabic reading practice (Chart 1) are a social phenomenon as seen among Egyptian readers (Haeri, 2009). Furthermore, recognizing the importance of being a good reader did not influence Saudis' reading motivation or increase their attempts to develop their Arabic reading practices (Table III). Saudis actually recognized the significance of Arabic reading practice because they admitted its importance in their lives or their profession. In addition, the uncertainty displayed by the participants' in their responses to the questions posed had only two possible explanations: limited Arabic reading outside of school to form their attitudes as demonstrated by Al-Mahrooqi and Denman (2018) and Rajab and Al-Sadi (2015), or discomfort in expressing themselves in the Arabic language which has an ideological attachment to Islam. In other words, if a person does not enjoy reading in Arabic, he or she does not enjoy reading the Quran (Muslim Holy Book).

Less than 15% of Saudis reported always or usually enjoying Arabic reading practice (Chart 1): an alarming finding when considering participants' education level and diversity. Study findings asserted the findings of the Rajab and Al-Sadi (2015) where only two out of five college students had read a whole book outside their school curricula. Thus, Arab students have far less reading practice than European or American students. Therefore, Saudis do not benefit from Arabic reading practice.

In general, the Saudis' absence of Arabic reading motivation makes them struggle to read resulting in a remarkable deficit in their literacy and learning skills. Logically, if they disliked reading, they would also detest visiting reading venues, such as a library or a bookstore. Barza and von Suchodoletz (2016) explained that visiting libraries is not a typical activity for Emirati families, a possible logical justification for Arabs' negative attitudes toward spending time in libraries. Neither Saudis nor Emiratis made regular visits to public or school libraries when they were young. Saudis mostly visited the library when the reading teacher was absent or they had free class time with nothing to do, as pointed out by one of the interviewees. As a result, they may not have emotionally become accustomed to spending time in the library or familiarizing themselves with it. Some studies, such as that by Haeri (2009), explained that some Arabic readers tended to avoid reading in Arabic because of the complexity of the Arabic language. However, most study participants did not struggle to read Arabic: more than 88% of them found Arabic reading as an easy or as a kind of easy process.

The Saudi system of education is gender-based, and females are completely segregated from males in schools. Libraries for female students are routinely more organized and cleaner than libraries for male students. There were gender differences in Saudi attitudes towards Arabic reading akin to what Murad (2007) found about Iraqis' Arabic reading attitude. Therefore, Saudi male students may spend less time in their libraries than female students. Saudi families did not commonly participate in Arabic reading portraying the current Saudi home literacy practices. Family members did not regularly read and this may negatively affect Arabic reading attitudes in the long-term. Martin et al.

(2017), who studied Jordanian reading practices, indicated that Jordanians did not read in public places, such as buses or trains. Therefore, there is a general disinclination towards Arabic reading.

Saudis expressed their enjoyment or delightfulness at receiving a book as a gift. But only a few participants spent time reading during their free time. On the other hand, only 10% admitted to having their favorite books at home, while 25% declared that they did not have their favorite books in their home libraries. Less than 40% of study participants expressed having either many or some of their favorite books at home. Even though all interviewed participants indicated having a library in their bedrooms or elsewhere in their homes, only one added some books to that library in the preceding year. Therefore, Saudis are not as interested in books.

Although Saudis are not positively motivated to read Arabic and associate it with negative motives, they still understand the ultimate importance of reading. Some studies, such as that by Haeri (2009), explained that some Arabic readers avoided Arabic reading because they of the complexity of reading and understanding the Arabic language. However, most participants (88%) did not struggle with Arabic reading. There is limited Saudi social, behavioral, and psychological support for Arabic reading and insufficient Arabic reading practices have a profound impact on Saudis' Arabic reading attitudes.

On the other hand, although Saudi EFL learners found reading in Arabic more enjoyable, certain topics and fields required them to read in English. These included information on modern science or technology innovations. However, the fact that Saudi EFL, especially male learners, practiced more pleasure reading in their first language indicates that there is a general conflict between their attitudes and real-life practice of English language reading because English reading is seen as a tool for career or professional development. Obviously, Saudis spend more time and effort practicing reading in English. The foreign reading process or comprehension is vastly distinctive from first language reading. EFLs pay more attention to the syntactical and semantical structure of the context when reading English texts than texts in their first language (Al-Qahtani, 2016). This sophisticated process requires more exertion to comprehend the context resulting in lack of enthusiasm about English reading practice. People tend to avoid problems or try to find easier ways to reach their goals. This could be the most logical explanation for the Saudi EFLs' psycholinguistic case.

Participants realized the significance of English as the lingua franca; however, their English reading practice did not reflect their need to be proficient in the English language. It is questionable whether the conscious realization of reading importance affects reading attitudes and practice. Therefore, understanding the importance of Arabic and English reading practice had not impacted Saudi reading attitudes.

Saudi females displayed more positive attitudes towards English reading than males but their friends' did not support English reading as much as males' friends. Those familiar with Saudi culture may understand the reason for this conflict. Saudi women are more conservative in speaking about their daily lives with other people or friends. As a result, Saudi women are more socially conservative than males. Therefore, females would be less comfortable talking about their reading practices with friends than Saudi males would with their friends.

The divergence between the reading motivation, attitudes and reading practice in English in EFL participants was present not only in Saudis but also in most Gulf States students. Previous studies (Al-Mutawa, 1994; Al Asmari, 2013; Al Samadani & Ibnian, 2015; Alotaibi, 2020; Kassem, 2013) showed that EFL learners from different Gulf States displayed positive emotions and beliefs about the English language. However, almost all studies that have examined Gulf States English learners' attitudes did not investigate their actual English reading practices to assess whether their good feelings aligned with their actual practices.

The availability of English reading books may affect participants' attitudes towards reading. Study interview participants (Saleh & Turkeye) explained that although they did not have English reading books at home, they had English books at school which they to learn English language skills. Arabic reading books, which are cheap, can be found in any public store or library; on the other hand, English books are only be found in specific expensive bookstores. Saudi youth may not afford English books, and only some family members read English books since usually two or three family members can read or speak English. Hence, it is uncommon to find English reading books in Saudi homes. Even Saudi school libraries do not have English learning sections or books as reported by study participants. Therefore, Saudis have fewer chances to read English books and develop favorable attitudes towards English reading. In addition, language barriers or limited internet search skills may prevent some participants from finding free online English reading materials.

To sum up, study results supported findings from previous studies' (Al Asmari, 2013; Al Samadani & Ibnian, 2015; Alotaibi, 2020; Kassem, 2013; Malallah, 2000; Qashoa, 2006; Shaaban & Ghaith, 2003) that state that Arabs and Saudis display more positive attitudes or motivation towards English reading. However, there were some attitudinal and motivational differences toward the English language between genders because Saudi males preferred English reading, while females preferred Arabic reading conflicting the claims of Al-Seghayer (2014) and Liton (2012) that Saudis are demotivated to learn English.

12. Conclusion

The study extensively evaluated Saudis' Arabic and English reading attitudes and examined the social factors influencing Saudi reading attitudes.

Saudi participants displayed uncertain attitudes towards maintaining Arabic reading despite admitting the significance of being a good Arabic reader. The noticeable increase in Saudis' Arabic reading attitude was not reflected in their practice of reading. Very few study participants had completed reading an Arabic book and Saudis commonly discontinued practicing Arabic reading. Moreover, participants disliked spending time in an Arabic library. School libraries were not a part of the school literacy practice process for many participants, especially males. Also, Arabic reading for enjoyment was not a common practice in Saudi families. Very few participants had home libraries

and their families had no influence on their reading practice.

Saudi families rarely shared Arabic reading materials, including online materials, or talked about what they read. Only a few participants mentioned that their families talked about a book they had read. Therefore, there is limited family and social support or encouragement to read or learn a language. However, the family or community supports English reading more than Arabic reading. Social support for reading practice influences reading attitudes. Over a half of the study participants' friends disliked Arabic reading or did not like it somewhat. Thus, Saudis and their friends did not have very positive attitudes towards Arabic reading. Interestingly, females generally had more positive attitudes towards Arabic reading but their communities' had opposing attitudes towards Arabic reading or speaking about Arabic reading.

The study also investigated pleasure reading, an uncommon practice for Saudi participants; the standard deviation of participants who spent most of their free time in reading was relatively low even though many reported enjoying home reading practice in both languages. This conflict illustrates the controversy between reading attitudes and actual reading practice in both English and Arabic. More females take part in pleasure reading, especially in the Arabic language, than males illustrating that most participants faced no difficulties in understanding Arabic (88%). But very few participants enjoyed Arabic reading. Interestingly, only a few of the participants were willing to share what they had read in Arabic or speak about it with their families. Less than 10% of the study participants practiced Arabic home reading. Despite understanding the significance of Arabic reading practice, study participants still held a negative attitude towards Arabic reading due to their lack of reading practice.

In contrast, Saudi participants held some more positive attitudes towards English reading than Arabic reading. They understood the significance of English reading more than they did for Arabic reading. However, their understanding of the significance of English reading unfortunately did not impact or increase their enjoyment in English reading practice, especially among females. Participants' language barriers, such as lexical barriers and linguistic barriers, had a direct impact on their English reading attitude. Females found English reading easier than males and enjoyed English reading more than Arabic reading. Hence, there was no correlation between positive English reading attitudes and actual the practice of reading.

Most of the English reading conducted by Saudi participants was for learning purposes as part of other language skills such as listening. Therefore, the English reading books that were commonly found in participants' houses were ESL or EFL reading books. Despite the lack of English pleasure reading books at participants' homes, participants enjoyed spending time in English book libraries more than they did in Arabic reading book libraries: 35.09% liked spending a time at an English reading book library, while only 15.79% liked spending time in an Arabic library. However, readers had more positive social attitudes towards Arabic reading practice than to English reading practice those. Males' participants' friends had more positive attitudes towards English reading practice than females' participants' friends Saudi males spent more of their free time in English reading practice than females. It is possible that of Saudi males were eager acquire English language skills which are essential for the advancement of their careers.

Saudi participants' choice of reading materials was highly influenced by their social connections, especially friends. The Saudi community is one of the collective Arab communities where social relationships are deeply valued. Most study participants' choice of their reading material in both languages (Arabic-English) were influenced by their friends' choices. Although all participants indicated the existence of a school library they visited when they were in primary or middle school, almost none of them talked about effectively using the library in their education, for instance, for instance to choose and find a book in library or book classes. Two of the interview participants stated that they only went to the school library when the classroom teacher was absent and a substitute teacher would take them to library to just make use of the class time.

Finally, Saudis' conversations about reading with their friends and taking about reading books with their friends or adding books to their home libraries highly influenced Saudi overall reading attitude in both languages (Arabic & English). Hence Saudi social attitudes and support for reading practice have the highest impact on Saudi reading attitudes.

In summary, study participants had unfavorable reading practice attitudes towards both Arabic and English. There was limited public or private social support for reading practice. Thus, few Saudi readers liked speaking about reading or what they have read. Limited access to public or school libraries, to reading materials, insufficient knowledge about how to find appropriate books or how to speak about reading could be attributed to suboptimal school reading experiences in primary and middle school. Reading is done for educational purposes and rarely for pleasure. However, the study participants practiced English pleasure reading more than Arabic pleasure reading.

13. Study Limitations

No study is without limitations. There were some limitations including:

- There was a gender imbalance in the number of study participants: there were 40 female and 72 male participants. Furthermore, only male participants were interviewed due to cultural and ideological barriers. Saudi culture is a conservative culture with a gender segregation policy. Therefore, a male cannot speak with an unrelated female.
- No observations were made in participants' homes or schools to investigate their views on using the library or on how schools motivate young students to read and enjoy spending time in the library.

The study limitations may or may have not influenced the study outcome. However, they must be considered in future studies on Saudi reading attitudes to further elucidate the Saudi Arabic and English reading attitudes.

14. Future Directions

Saudi reading motivation or attitudes have not been widely investigated, neither have the social factors that may have an impact on their reading attitudes. Studying Saudi literacy attitudes is an emerging field in the Saudi literary research context. Researchers tend to avoid the social factors that influence Saudi reading attitudes because studying them requires more time, effort, and official institutional permissions to observe reading attitudes in Saudi homes and schools. Consequently, future studies investigating Saudi reading attitudes should:

- Examine Saudi parents' attitudes toward reading and its influence on their children's reading attitude. None of the previous studies investigated the relationship between the home's or parents' reading attitudes and individual reading attitudes.
- Study Saudi schools' teaching procedures and how to enhance Saudi students' reading attitudes. Most Saudi school reading studies have focused on examining teaching methods rather than how teachers motivate readers to practice extracurricular reading.
- Study the relationship between reading motivation and peers' or friends' attitudes toward reading practice. In the Saudi collective society, siblings, peers, friends, and relatives may have a profound influence on an individual's reading attitude.

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