

Reading Habit in Alpha Generation Students: The Role of Mother Attachment and Family Literacy Environment

Saskia Ratry Arsiwie, Melly Latifah, Istiqlaliyah Muflikhati

Family Science and Child Development Study, Human Ecology Department, IPB University,

Jl. Raya Dramaga, Babakan, Bogor, Jawa Barat, 16680, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Alpha Generation children have many family living habits and parenting patterns that are very different from previous generations, especially reading habits where the alpha generation is more familiar with gadgets than reading books. This research aims to analyze the influence and relationship between mother-child attachment, and family literacy environment, on the reading habits of Alpha Generation children. This study uses a quantitative method using non-probability sampling by distributing questionnaires. Respondents are alpha-generation children in DKI Jakarta studying at state junior high schools. The total respondents in this study were 490 children aged 12-14 years. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) test results show that Mother-Child Attachment significantly influences children's reading habits when mediated by the Family Literacy Environment. At the same time, the Family Literacy Environment plays the biggest role in improving children's reading habits. It is hoped that this research will be useful for the government to be more active in socializing the importance of Mother-Child Attachment and parental knowledge of literacy to improve children's reading habits.

Keywords: Alpha Generation, Family Literacy Environment, Mother-Child Attachment, Reading Habits

INTRODUCTION

Alpha Generation

The Alpha Generation refers to the generation born after 2010 who are highly familiar with digital technology and considered the smartest compared to previous generations. They are characterized as being very close to technology, such as using laptops, computers, and the internet extensively. The Alpha Generation is known for using gadgets and technology, which can sometimes lead to social alienation. They are described as bossy, dominant, and controlling, with a tendency to exploit weaknesses to show dominance, although they do not engage in bullying behavior (Miranda et al., 2023). The behavior of the Alpha Generation has been observed to change reading habits through the use of technology such as smartphones and laptops. They have shifted towards reading novels, journals, comics, and other materials through digital platforms rather than traditional books or paper (Rafiq et al., 2019). The Alpha Generation's strong attachment to technology and digital devices influences this shift in reading habits. In the digital age, the Alpha Generation's reading habits are influenced by technology, with students reading novels on smartphones, searching for learning materials online, reading e-books, and comics through applications, and accessing various written works and journals online. The use of technology has significantly impacted the reading trends and behaviors of the Alpha Generation, shaping their habits in the digital era.

Reading Habit

Reading is defined as an active attempt on the part of the reader to understand a writer's message, which involves cracking the code and analyzing, reasoning, thinking, imagining, and judging (Baba & Rostam Affendi, 2020). Reading is a process of thinking, recalling, and relating ideas under the functioning of written words. It is the ability to comprehend what is seen in the text, which is the ability of the reader to capture before processing that information and acquire meaning from it. Reading habits refer to the frequency and types of reading materials individuals engage with, as well as their attitudes towards reading. It includes factors influencing reading habits such as the presence of books at home, influence from parents and friends, the influence of teachers, and the relationship between basic reading literacy and academic success (Baba & Rostam Affendi, 2020). These habits are influenced by various factors, including digital technology, social media, and the use of gadgets. The impact of digital technology on reading habits, both positive and negative, is a key focus of the research, with an emphasis on understanding how technology is influencing the reading behaviors of the younger generation (Miranda et al., 2023).

Mother Attachment

Mother attachment is the emotional bond developed by a mother with her child, influenced by factors such as the attachment style she developed with her parents (Karakas et al., 2021). The attachment bond between a mother and child provides the child with confidence and comfort, forming a secure basis for the infant (Zayia et al., 2021). The quality of the relationship established with the primary caregiver in the early years is crucial for the development of close relationships in later years. Attachment behavior in infants is triggered by environmental and intrinsic stimuli, such as feelings of distress, hunger, danger, and fear, leading the infant to seek closeness to the caregiver for trust and comfort (Bowlby, 1980).

Overall, mother attachment plays a crucial role in the emotional development and well-being of the child, influenced by the mother's own experiences and attachment style with her parents. Factors such as intergenerational interactions can impact the attachment patterns developed by mothers with their children (Bowlby, 1973).

Family Literacy Environment

Family Literacy Environment (FLE) refers to the literacy activities and resources available within the home that contribute to children's literacy development. This includes factors such as parental literacy beliefs, parental education level, parental involvement in their children's literacy activities, and the availability of home literacy resources (Dong et al., 2020). The Family Literacy Environment (FLE) is comprised of several key factors that contribute to children's literacy development. These factors include: (1) Parental Literacy Beliefs (PLB): This refers to parental expectations of children's performance in literacy-related activities. (2) Parental Education Years at School (PEY): Also known as parental education level, this factor reflects the educational attainment of parents. (3) Parental Literacy Involvement in Children's Activities (PLI): This encompasses the extent to which parents are actively involved in their children's literacy-related activities and learning. (4) Home Literacy Resources (HLR): This includes the availability of literacy equipment (e.g., TV or radio), literacy materials (e.g., storybooks, CDs), and the literacy language environment within the home (Anggraini & Susanto, 2020). These factors collectively contribute to the richness of the home literacy environment and play a vital role in children's literacy knowledge acquisition and academic achievement.

METHODS

This study used an explanatory type non-experimental design to test the hypothesis of the relationship

between Alpha Generation Children's Characteristics, Parent Characteristics, Mother-Child Attachment, Family Literacy Environment, and Reading Habits. The research method used was quantitative by distributing questionnaires to collect data in DKI Jakarta, the province with the highest percentage of Alibaca index (Reading Literacy Activity) among 34 provinces in Indonesia (Puslitjakdikbud, 2019). Data were collected during January 2024.

Participants

The population in this study were children aged 12-14 years who were first-grade students at junior high schools in DKI Jakarta. The selection of schools was carried out by non-probability sampling in the type of purposive / cluster sampling. Respondents were selected with certain criteria and considered representative of the population. This study will use a sample of 490 respondents obtained using the Slovin formula (Slovin 1960). A total of 490 respondents in this study were taken from 4 public junior high schools in DKI Jakarta.

Measurements

In this study, the type of data collected consists of primary data. Primary data was obtained using data collection techniques with several questionnaires that had been prepared by the researcher. A pilot test of the questionnaire was carried out to check the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. The primary data in this study are (1) Characteristics of Alpha Generation Children consisting of gender, age, school, and class. (2) Parent Characteristics consisting of: father's age, mother's age, father's years of education, mother's years of education, father's job, mother's job, family income. (3) Mother-child attachment was measured using The Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA-R) instrument (Gullone & Robinson, 2005). The measuring instrument consists of 28 statements. (4) Family Literacy Environment measured using the Home Literacy Environment (HLE) Questionnaire instrument (Buvanawari & Padakannaya, 2017) which is a combination of measuring instruments from Griffin and Morrison (1997), Foy and Mann (2003), Caldwell and Bradley (1984), Martini (2004), Norman (2007), and has been modified by the researcher to adjust the research objectives. The measuring instrument consists of 55 statements. (5) Children's Reading Habits were measured using the Reading Habit Questionnaire (RHQ) instrument (Rhee, 2001) which has been modified by the researcher to adjust the research objectives. This instrument consists of 34 statements.

Analysis

The data that has been collected is then processed through the process of entering data through Microsoft Office Excel, then the data is given a score according to the provisions on each instrument. After scoring, the data is cleaned from outliers and then processed on SPSS to see the results of descriptive calculations. Furthermore, to see the relationship and influence between variables, the data is processed using Smart-PLS.

FINDINGS

Respondent Characteristics

The alpha generation children involved in this study consisted of 490 people, divided into 253 boys (51.6%) and 237 girls (48.4%) with an age range of 12 to 14 years (average age 13 years) and occupying the 1st-grade junior high school education level. Respondents were spread across 4 public junior high schools in DKI Jakarta in East Jakarta City, namely 64 children (13.1%) from SMPN 81, 72 children (14.7%) from SMPN 157, 216 children (44.1%) from SMPN 272, and 138 children (28.2%) from SMPN 49. Of the various types of reading besides textbooks, more than 50% of respondents liked reading the Bible, comics, short stories, and novels. The average score of respondents' ability to read Scripture, comics, short stories,

and novels was at a good level.

Family Characteristics

Table 1 shows that more than 50% of the respondent's father's and mother's latest education only reached the senior high school (SHS) level, which means that they are moderately educated, with 31.6% of the father's occupation being a private employee and 51.8% of the mother's occupation being a housewife. Then, the income of most respondents' fathers (31%) is in the range of IDR 2,450,000-IDR 4,900,000, which is classified as low to meet the DKI Jakarta UMP in 2023 according to BPS, which is IDR 4,901,798. Meanwhile, more than half of the respondents' mothers (61.4%) had no income. Thus it can be concluded that most of the respondents' parents only rely on the family income from the father's job. Meanwhile, 49.5% of respondents had a medium-sized family with 5-7 family members.

Table 1. Distribution of Family Characteristics

	Father		Mother	
	n	Percentage (%)	n	Percentage (%)
Last Education				
Elementary School	28	5,7	34	6,9
Junior High School	47	9,6	56	11,4
Senior High School	247	50,4	252	51,4
Diploma	29	5,9	32	6,5
Bachelor Degree	99	20,2	92	18,8
Master Degree	37	7,6	21	4,3
Not In School	3	0,6	3	0,6
Jobs				
Labor	57	11,6	4	0,8
Private Employee	155	31,6	40	8,2
Public Servant	57	11,6	12	2,4
Entrepreneur	98	20	83	16,9
Not Working (Housewife)	13	2,7	254	51,8
Etc	109	22,2	97	19,8
Income				
≤ IDR 2.450.000	119	24,3	88	18
IDR 2.450.000 < x ≤ IDR 4.900.000	152	31	36	7,3
IDR 4.900.000 < x ≤ IDR 7.300.000	88	18	27	5,5
IDR 7.300.000 < x ≤ IDR 9.800.000	39	8	14	2,9
> IDR 9.800.000	66	13,5	24	4,9
No Income	26	5,3	61,4	61,4
Family Member	n		Percentage (%)	
Small ≤ 4 orang	240		49	
Average 5-7 orang	223		49,5	
Big ≥ 8 orang	27		5,5	

Mother-Child Attachment, Family Literacy Environment, And Children’s Reading Habits

Based on the results of the distribution of each variable, the respondents Mother-Child Attachment scores ranged from 39-78 with an average value of 65.16 and a standard deviation of 7.767. The Trust category has the highest mean value of 24.63, while the Communication and Alienation categories have values that are not much different, namely 20.81 and 20.43. This indicates that on average, respondents have high Mother-Child Bonding and a higher sense of trust with their mothers than communication and alienation. Next, the Family Literacy Environment variable has values ranging from 71-252 with a mean value of 165.06 and a standard deviation of 31.628. The category with the highest score was Parent Interaction with Children with a mean score of 64.43, while the lowest category was Children Interest In Reading & Writing with a mean score of 18.15. This means that the average respondent’s Family Literacy Environment is in the moderate category. The Reading Habits variable has values ranging from 35-147 with an average of 99.73. This shows that the majority of respondents’ Reading Habits are in the moderate category.

The Relationship of Parent Characteristics with Mother-Child Attachment, and Family Literacy Environment, to Children’s Reading Habits

Respondent’s parent characteristics have several factors that are related to Mother-Child Attachment, Family Literacy Environment, and Reading Habits of Alpha Generation children (sig value <0.05) presented in Table 2. The father’s and Mother’s Last Education on Family Literacy Environment had significant values of 0.004 and 0.000 (<0.05) respectively. Therefore, it can be said that parental education strongly influences the respondents’ family literacy environment. Then Mother’s Last Education has a significant influence (0.046<0.05) on Mother-Child Attachment, the higher the mother’s education, the higher the Mother-Child Attachment. Meanwhile, Mother’s Last Education on Reading Habits has a significance value of 0.005<0.05 so it can be stated that Mother’s Last Education strongly influences respondent’s Reading Habits. It also shows that the higher the mother’s education, the better the child’s reading habits. The father’s Income has a significant influence (0.027<0.05) on the Family Literacy Environment, which means that the higher the father’s income the higher the Family Literacy Environment built in the respondent’s home.

Table 2. Correlation of Parental Characteristics with All Research Variables

	Mother-Child Attachment		Family Literacy Environment		Reading Habit	
	Sig	Cor	Sig	Cor	Sig	Cor
Father’s Last Education	0.262	0.051	0.004	0.130	0.197	0.058
Mother’s Last Education	0.046	0.090	0.000	0.194	0.005	0.126
Father’s Job	0.047	-0.090	0.333	-0.044	0.082	-0.079
Mother’s Job	0.670	-0.19	0.431	-0.036	0.864	0.008
Father’s Income	0.461	0.033	0.027	0.100	0.451	0.034
Mother’s Income	0.153	0.065	0.284	0.049	0.275	0.049
Family Member	0.372	-0.040	0.423	-0.036	0.937	-0.004

Mother-Child Attachment, Family Literacy Environment, And Children’s Reading Habits

Table 3 presents the correlation value between variables with Pearson Correlation and Significance values. It can be seen that the variable Mother-Child Attachment to Reading Habits has a correlation value of 0.160 and a significance of 0.000. The direction of influence is directly proportional, meaning that the higher the Mother-Child Attachment, the higher the child’s Reading Habits. Likewise, the relationship between the

variables of Mother-Child Attachment with Family Literacy Environment, and Family Literacy Environment with Reading Habits.

Table 3. Correlation Values Between Variables

Variables	Pearson Correlation	Sig (2 tailed)	Description
Mother-Child Attachment → Reading Habit	0.160	0.000	Significance
Mother-Child Attachment → Family Literacy Environment	0.486	0.000	Significance
Family Literacy Environment → Reading Habit	0.598	0.000	Significance

The Influence of Mother-Child Attachment and Family Literacy Environment on Children’s Reading Habits

Based on the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) in Figure 1, it is known that 41.9% of children’s reading habits are influenced by the variables of mother-child attachment and family literacy environment. Meanwhile, judging from the path coefficient, Family Literacy Environment contributes the largest effect on children’s Reading Habits compared to other variables, which is 0.618. Meanwhile, Mother-Child Attachment has a significant negative effect of -0.132, which means that in this study the more attached the mother and child are, the lower the child’s reading habit. This is explained by the relationship between the variables of parental characteristics and the independent variables presented in Table 2 earlier, that the mother’s final education is a factor that has a role in improving children’s reading habits, while in this study most of the mother respondents only had a final education at the high school level.

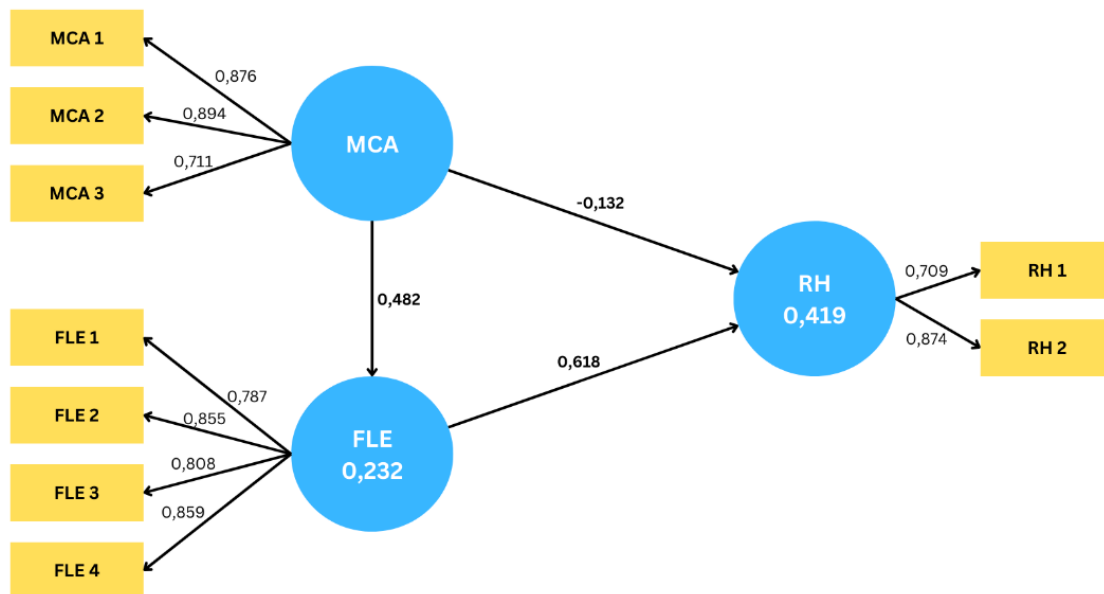


Figure 1. SEM algorithm consists of Path Coefficient, Factor Loading, and Cronbach Alpha values.

Notes: MCA = Mother-Child Attachment (MCA_1 = Trust, MCA_2 = Communication, MCA_3 = Alienation); FLE = Family Literacy Environment (FLE_1 = Belief About Reading Writing Activities, FLE_2 = Children Interest Reading Writing Activities, FLE_3 = Material Use For Reading Writing, FLE_4 = Parent Interaction); RH = Reading Habit (RH_1 = Reading Habit, RH_2 = Reading Pattern).

Based on the effect test, the significance values, magnitude, and direction of the direct, indirect, and total effects it is found that Mother-Child Attachment has a positive influence on children’s reading habits, but indirectly, which is mediated by the family literacy environment. In the total effect, Mother-Child

Attachment has a positive significant value of 0.212.

DISCUSSIONS

According to the results that have been presented, the family literacy environment has the greatest influence and is the main determinant of the high and low reading habits of alpha-generation children. Mother-child attachment can help improve the reading habits of alpha-generation children if the attachment is mediated by building a family literacy environment. Meanwhile, if the mother-child attachment is not mediated by the family literacy environment, it may make children reduce their reading habits because even though children are attached to their mothers, it does not necessarily mean that the mother has good literacy skills to be transmitted to her child.

This is in line with research conducted by (Anggraini & Susanto, 2020) that mother-child attachment can influence children's reading habits if mothers or parents create an environment that supports literacy activities at home, such as providing reading materials that are suitable for children's interests and ages and inviting children to libraries, reading parks, bookstores and book fairs to foster children's interest in reading. In addition, parents also need to allocate time, effort, and attention to optimize the family literacy culture by conducting literacy activities with their children and encouraging their children or other family members to participate in literacy-related activities. Based on research (Dong et al., 2020), the ideal family literacy environment at home includes providing reading materials, using information technology media, actively participating in literacy activities, setting positive examples, and supporting the literacy movement at school. This aims to create a strong literacy culture in the family environment, which can support children's development, interests, and reading habits.

Mother-child attachment alone without the support of an adequate literacy environment can reduce children's reading habits. However, if this attachment is supported by a rich literacy environment, children's reading habits can develop well. Very high attachment between mother and child often involves a lot of time together that may be spent on non-reading activities, such as playing, talking, or doing other activities that do not involve literacy. Kuo and Cheng (2020) found that parents' involvement in different activities had different effects on children's literacy. Often, time spent on non-literacy activities such as playing or talking without a literacy context does not provide enough stimulus to train children's reading habits. Therefore, while time with parents is important, without activities that support literacy, children may not get enough encouragement to develop their reading habits.

Liu and Han (2019) point out that strong emotional attachment between parents and children can influence various aspects of children's development, including independence and social competence. Children who are highly emotionally dependent on their parents may be more likely to seek comfort and emotional support rather than exploring independent activities such as reading. This may reduce the child's opportunity to develop good reading habits. The child may be more likely to seek comfort or support from the mother than from self-activities such as reading a book. Domingues-Montanari (2017) reviewed the negative impact of excessive screen time on children, including a decrease in time spent on other activities such as reading. Activities such as watching television and playing video games can be a substitute for literacy activities, reducing time that could otherwise be spent reading and developing children's literacy skills.

High attachment can also mean that the child is more often invited to participate in activities that the mother enjoys that may not be reading. For example, the mother may invite the child to play outside more often, watch television together, or do other activities that they enjoy together. Wang and Degol (2017) discuss motivation and independence theories which suggest that excessive parental support can reduce children's drive to engage in independent activities such as reading. Children who are accustomed to being constantly

accompanied by their parents may not develop the confidence and intrinsic motivation to read on their own, which is important for building independent reading habits. Strong attachment can reduce a child's independence in many ways, including reading. If children are used to spending time with their mom, they may be less motivated to take the initiative to read on their own. Highly attached mothers may focus on other aspects of parenting that are not directly related to literacy.

If mothers do not actively promote reading habits or provide a literacy-rich environment, children may not receive enough stimulation to develop strong reading habits. Pace et al. (2019) highlighted the importance of literacy stimulation from parents for children's academic and social success. If mothers are not active in encouraging reading habits or providing a literacy-rich environment, children may not get enough stimulation to develop reading habits. The importance of the mother's role in creating a supportive literacy environment cannot be overlooked.

CONCLUSION

Based on descriptive tests, the alpha generation children involved in this study consisted of 490 people, divided into 253 boys (51.6%) and 237 girls (48.4%) with an average age of 13 years. Half of the respondent's father's and mother's education was senior high school, with almost a third of the respondent's father's occupation being a private employee and half of the respondent's mother's occupation being a housewife. Almost one-third of the fathers' income was in the range of IDR2,450,000-IDR4,900,000 and more than half of the mothers had no income. Almost half of the respondents were categorized as medium-sized families consisting of 5-7 family members. More than a third of the respondents often play games on the internet, and more than half of the respondents like reading scriptures, comics, novels, and short stories.

Based on the mean value test per variable, the average respondent had an average mother-child attachment, high Family Literacy Environment, and low Reading Habits category. Based on the relationship test, the last education of both father and mother had a significant positive relationship with the Family Literacy Environment. Meanwhile, a mother's education alone also had a significant positive effect on Mother-Child Attachment and Reading Habits. The higher the Mother-Child Attachment, the higher the Family Literacy Environment and Reading Habits of alpha-generation children. Based on the effect test, Mother-Child Attachment has a significant positive indirect effect on Reading Habits, which is mediated by the Family Literacy Environment. Meanwhile, the Family Literacy Environment contributed the most influence to the high and low reading habits of alpha generation children.

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