

STUDENTS' READING ANXIETY AND COMPREHENSION IN AN INDONESIAN MADRASAH: A CORRELATIONAL CASE STUDY

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Abstract: *The capacity to extract information from written texts and exhibit knowledge or comprehension of that information is known as reading comprehension. The word "anxiety" is vague and difficult to define and describe in a straightforward statement. Feelings of unease, dissatisfaction, self-doubt, apprehension, or worry are frequently linked to anxiety. The objective of this research is to investigate the correlation between student's anxiety and reading comprehension. This research employs quantitative correlational study, with 54 samples of students. The analysis method uses adapted FLRAS and reading comprehension test. Students' anxiety levels and their reading comprehension achievement had negative association of -0.407, according to the research's statistical analysis. This correlation's N.Sig value of .002 (less than 0.05) indicated that it was also statistically significant. As a result, the null hypothesis (H₀) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted.*

Keywords: *students' anxiety, understanding of reading*

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INTRODUCTION

Reading is an essential language skill that is key to developing their knowledge. Comprehension a comprehensive grasp of the text is the main goal of reading (Anderson & Anderson, 1998). This implies that in order for pupils to read well, they must become proficient in the reading process so they can understand texts that are presented in various ways. Consequently, reading and the ability to comprehend are two sides of the same coin. the objective of reading is comprehension, or a thorough understanding of the text (Clouse, 2004). This suggests that students must master the reading process to extract meaning from various text forms. Thus, reading and comprehension are intrinsically linked.

One of the unfavorable emotions that can affect pupils' academic performance is anxiety. For worried kids, it makes it harder for them to understand and recall concept. For instance, it is challenging to concentrate while reading and not fully understanding what is being read (Chakrabarti, Anupama and Segupta, 2012). People cannot disregard how the class may affect their reading comprehension or improve their reading skills if they want to succeed in studying a foreign language (Lewin, 2003). Students frequently experience anxiety during the learning process as they acquire foreign languages in all subject areas. Students must read a lot of text, particularly in reading comprehension.

Lastly UNESCO stated that Indonesia ranks second lowest in worldwide literacy rates. Indicating a notable lack of interest in reading among its people. it indicates that only 0.001% of Indonesians show interest in reading (Laksmi, 2007). It can be concluded that, despite high literacy rates, Indonesia has very low reading engagement and comprehension and ranks poorly in global reading preferences. Above all, the crucial point is that the authors fill the gaps of previous studies. Some earlier studies were also relevant to the connection between reading comprehension achievement and reading anxiety. students' reading anxiety and comprehension were sufficiently correlated. Third, a research conducted by Kartika et al. comprised 88 high school students as a sample. The findings demonstrated no discernible relationship between pupils' reading comprehension and reading anxiety. Additionally, it has been demonstrated that students' reading proficiency is significantly impacted by reading anxiety(Annura, T., Warna, D., & Sartika, 2024).

Considering from previous research mentioned above, the researcher discovered research gaps and novelty. The connection between reading anxiety and reading comprehension proficiency has been studied. However, no research had been conducted at Private school especially Madrasah Tsanawiyah in Pamekasan. Additionally, based on the researcher experienced while teaching At MTs Plus Nurul Ilmi, there were some of the students faced difficulties and anxiety while reading along and got revision from the teacher. They were afraid to make mistakes and felt shy to read English texts in class. Therefore, this study is presented as a case study at MTs Plus Nurul 'Ilmi Pamekasan to highlight the correlation between students' reading anxiety and their reading comprehension achievement in the specific context of a private Madrasah Tsanawiyah. Understanding the connection between reading anxiety and reading comprehension in Madrasah Tsanawiyah context may be lacking because prior research may have concentrated on public schools like state high schools, vocational high schools, or other educational establishments. As a result, the novelty of this study could be attributed to the unique particular situation of Madrasah Tsanawiyah Nurul Ilmi.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Nature of Reading Comprehension

The capacity to extract information from written texts and exhibit knowledge or comprehension of that information is known as reading comprehension (Annura, T., Warna, D., & Sartika, 2024). When a reader can understand the information offered in a written text, comprehension has taken place. It implies that comprehension of what you read is not a passive process. In order to generate meaning, reading comprehension necessitates the reader's action, which includes applying prior knowledge about the text's subject as well as the text itself. Reading comprehension is the process of simultaneously generating and deriving meaning through interaction with written language. It suggests that the basis of successful reading comprehension is the capacity to understand and create information.

The definition's primary strength lies in its alignment with constructivist learning theories, which view learners as active builders of knowledge rather than passive recipients. By stating that comprehension is not a passive process, the definition correctly refutes outdated models of reading that treated it as simple decoding of words. It frames comprehension as a dynamic, cognitive activity. The phrase "generating and deriving meaning through interaction" is crucial. This aligns with foundational cognitive models, which posit that readers build a mental representation of the text (the "textbase") by integrating it with their existing knowledge. The interaction creates a richer, more personalized understanding (Cain, K., Oakhill, J., & Bryant, 2004). The mention of applying "prior knowledge" directly invokes Schema Theory. A reader's existing mental frameworks (schemata) for a topic are essential for making inferences, filling in gaps, and truly understanding the text. Without relevant prior knowledge, a reader can decode words but will likely fail to comprehend the deeper meaning (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

Level of Reading Comprehension

When reading any textbook, students should experience the following three degrees of comprehension, in order of decreasing to increasing. Gradually, students go from the easiest to the most challenging books. They will probably be able to advance and achieve greater success in their studies with improved reading skills. As a result, three understanding levels are distinguished (Brassell, 2008). The first is literal comprehension which is the most basic and fundamental reading skill because they must fully comprehend the author's point before they can begin drawing conclusions or assessing the material. The model implies that a reader must first achieve full literal understanding before they can make inferences, and only then can they engage in critical analysis. As (Cain, K., & Oakhill, 2006) state that Cognitive science research suggests reading is a much more interactive and dynamic process. A skilled reader performs these actions simultaneously. For instance, you

might critically evaluate an author's word choice (critical) at the same moment you are decoding it (literal) and inferring its connotation (inferential).

Inferential comprehension which is understanding concepts and details that are not explicitly mentioned in a book is known as inferential comprehension. Students can understand unspoken major ideas, infer supporting facts, and identify cause-and-effect linkages at this level. This model is purely cognitive because It doesn't account for how a reader's personal experiences, cultural background, beliefs, and motivation shape their understanding.

Critical Literacy Theory, for example, argues that true critical comprehension involves questioning power structures and whose voice is represented or silenced in a text. As stated by (Luke, 2012b), a dimension that goes beyond the model's scope, a reader's purpose for reading and their emotional engagement also dramatically influence the depth of their comprehension at all levels. Critical comprehension is Analyzing, assessing, and responding to the information in a paragraph is known as critical comprehension. Because critical reading entails assessing and forming an opinion about the veracity and worth of the material being read, it demands a greater level of skill development and perception. It entails analyzing, contrasting, and questioning.

The Purpose of Reading

Different reading goals and purposes mean different comprehension needs. When someone chooses to read, they do so with a specific aim in mind. Having a clear reading purpose helps students focus on what they want to gain from the text(Harmer, 2007). Reading can be done for a variety of reasons. People occasionally read texts for leisure, to learn new information, and to complete assignments. The four primary categories of reading purposes are as follows (Grabe, 2011): (a). Reading to search for simple information and reading to skim. (b)Reading to learn from texts (c)Reading to integrate information, write and critique texts.

To summarize, Reading's main objective is to increase knowledge by various means, including critical thinking, leaning lessons from text, or simply finding specific information. As (Raphael, 2005) said that given the significance of reading comprehension in education, junior high school students are expected to grasp the meaning of both short functional texts and simple essays such as hortatory explication, recounting, descriptive, and narrative. However, this particular research will focus solely on descriptive texts, which will be discussed in the following section.

The Nature of Anxiety

In our daily lives, unexpected situations often trigger anxiety, a negative feeling that can emerge at various times. It's characterized by a sense of uncertainty or hesitation about one's abilities or intended actions. This feeling can manifest as low self-confidence, ultimately hindering an individual's potential for maximum success (Jeanne, E.O., Anderman E, M., and Anderman, 2017). A person's anxiety may have an impact on their ability to learn a foreign language. High levels of anxiety can have a detrimental impact, particularly on a person's academic performance.

Feelings of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry are the subjective hallmarks of anxiety, which is frequently accompanied with the autonomic nervous system of the body being activated. It usually manifests as a response to stressful circumstances or imagined dangers. According to (Passer, 2003), it is a normal reaction to a perceived threat that causes stress and worry. It indicates that when people feel threatened, they naturally get worried. Anxiety is a state of unease and trepidation about a situation whose conclusion is uncertain.

It is difficult to define anxiety because it is a complicated and ethereal idea. It is frequently associated with emotions of unease, annoyance, self-doubt, anxiety, and concern. According to (Atkinson, Rita L., 1983) anxiety is frequently brought on by stressful circumstances, disagreements, annoyance, perceived dangers to one's physical safety or self-worth, and pressure to perform over one's limits. Additionally, those who have poor self-esteem typically experience anxiety because they constantly believe that they are incapable of succeeding or doing excellent things.

Based on the aforementioned explanation, anxiety can be summed up as a sensation of apprehension that occurs when someone encounters a terrible circumstance. An anxious person will concentrate more on anticipating the negative outcomes than the pleasant ones. Additionally, anxiety hinders learning; it causes them to become distracted from the work at hand, making it difficult to concentrate. As a result, anxiety has a significant impact on learning. Knowing if a student's fear is a result of a trait or a current circumstance is crucial for teachers in the classroom.

Types of Anxiety

Students' self-esteem and confidence may suffer as a result of anxiety, which may ultimately hinder their ability to learn a language. Anxiety can take many different forms. One can categorize anxiety into two kinds, first is anxiety that tends to be more persistent is known as trait anxiety. Someone's character has turned into a propensity. The next is state anxiety, which is a transient emotional response to a potentially dangerous circumstance (Brown, 2000).

Anxiety is thought to both encourage and hinder language acquisition, while it may sometimes have the opposite impact. Alpert and Haber in Brown (2000), differentiate between beneficial and harmful anxiety, as well as between debilitating and facilitative anxiety. Anxiety that is detrimental is called debilitating anxiety. It hinders the process of acquiring a language. Students that are anxious find it difficult to complete certain tasks; they are uneasy and lack confidence (Israel, 2007). They will be less focused as a result, which could affect how they learn the language. Moreover, Anxiety that is useful is called facilitative anxiety. Facilitative anxiety is in contrast to debilitating anxiety since it has a positive impact (Luke, 2012a). Facilitative anxiety has been shown to be beneficial for learning foreign languages in a number of studies. Bailey's study of anxiety and competitiveness in second language learning found that competitiveness was closely related to facilitative anxiety, which was one of the keys to success. It motivated students to put in more effort in their coursework.

Thus, anxiety can be separated into two categories, first anxiety that is more acute and varies depending on the individual is known as trait anxiety. State anxiety is a sensation of worry and unease that is a reaction to a specific event. Furthermore, there are a few reasons why anxiety manifests. A more robust analysis recognizes foreign language anxiety not merely as a communication issue linked to personality, but as a complex, multi-faceted psychological construct that is specific to the language learning situation and can affect learners across all language skills (K. Cain, J. Oakhill, 2004).

Components of Language Anxiety

Three elements of anxiety related to learning a foreign language have been identified as The incapacity of learners to effectively articulate adult thoughts and ideas is the root cause of communication anxiety. It is typically linked to traits like introversion, silence, and shyness. Since interpersonal interactions are the main focus of foreign language classes, communication anxiety contributes significantly to foreign language anxiety. Students must use both speaking and listening techniques to interact with the target language in foreign language classes. The text links communication anxiety to stable personality traits like introversion and shyness. While a correlation exists, research shows that foreign language anxiety is a situation-specific anxiety (J. D. K. Trang, 2012).

This means that even highly extroverted and confident individuals can experience intense anxiety in a foreign language context. The anxiety often stems more from a perceived threat to one's social identity and the fear of "losing face" than from an inherent personality trait. Their inadequate proficiency in the target language may cause pupils to feel anxious when speaking. Students fear that they will struggle to comprehend people

when they listen and to be understood when they talk, which leads to communication anxiety (Ormrod, 2011).

Hence, Fear of negative social evaluation stems from students' desire to create a positive impression on others. This often leads to students being afraid of negative judgment from both their teachers, who are typically the most fluent speakers in the classroom, and their classmates (McDonough, 2003). Test anxiety refers to the fear associated with performance on assessments. It's the apprehension about being formally evaluated and potentially failing, which can be distinct from the anxiety of casual conversation (Teimouri, Y., Goetze, J., & Gárate-Rascón, 2019). Test anxiety, on the other hand, is the fear of failing academic evaluations. This type of anxiety emerges specifically in testing situations (Gardner, 2001). Students experiencing test anxiety might have had negative past experiences with tests, causing them to dread future assessments. They may also hold unrealistic beliefs about language learning, demanding perfection and viewing anything less as a complete failure.

METHOD

Using the statistical process of correlational analysis, researchers in this quantitative correlational study assess the strength of the relationship or association between two or more variables. Two variables were used in this study. While "Y" represented the students' reading comprehension success, "X" represented the students' worry, which was the independent variable. This research was conducted at MTS Plus Nurul 'Ilmi Pamekasan, especially at the eighth-grade students. It is because there is a gap of the seventh-grade students' reading comprehension achievement compared to those in eighth graders. One class of fifty-four eighth-grade students from MTS Plus Nurul 'Ilmi makes up the population of this study. The researcher included every population as a respondent because there were fewer than 100 populations (Creswell, 2008).

To collect the data, the researcher used tools. These consist of a questionnaire to determine students' anxiety levels and a descriptive reading comprehension test to assess students' reading comprehension.

The researcher employed a series of questionnaires with 20 items to gather information about the students' anxiousness. The questionnaire was designed as the Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale (FLRAS), a modification of Saito et al (Saito, Horwitz, & Garza, 1999).

Table 1

The Outline of Questionnaire

No	Indicator	Total	Key Number
1	Students' self-report of anxiety over various aspects of reading	8	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 17
2	The perception of reading difficulties in the target language	10	2, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 18, 19, 20,
3	Their perception of the relative difficulty of reading as compared to the difficulty of other language skills	2	15, 16,

Five response options were offered to the students on the Likert-type questionnaire used in this study: strongly disagree (Sangat tidak setuju (STS)), disagree (Sangat setuju (SS)), agree (Sangat setuju (S)), neutral (Neutral (N)), and strongly agree (Sangat setuju (SS)). The scale's degree was displayed as follows

Table 2

The Questionnaire scoring

Scale	Affirmative Statement Score	Negative Statement Score
Strongly Agree	5	1
Agree	4	2
Neutral	3	3
Disagree	2	4
Strongly Agree	1	5

In order to prevent the possibility of varying interpretations of the statement, the questionnaire was translated into Bahasa Indonesia. As a result, students found it easier to comprehend and respond to the question when the statement was written in Bahasa Indonesia.

Data collection was significantly aided by the test apparatus. The purpose of this study is to determine the pupils' reading comprehension scores by giving them tests. The reading assignment and related question were chosen based on the students' level-appropriate books and other sources. Multiple choice formats were employed by the researcher to increase the score's objectivity. The descriptive reading comprehension test indicator was this.

Table 3

Indicator of descriptive reading comprehension test

Theme	Indicator	Question Number	Total
My brother	Determining topic of the text	1	2
	Finding specific information	2	
A pet	Determining topic of the text	3	2
	Looking for main idea	4	

Blue bird	Determining topic of the text	5	3
	Finding specific information	6	
	Synonym	7	
My new neighbor	Determining topic of the text	8	4
	Looking for main idea	9	
	Finding specific information	10	
	Finding implicit information	11	
Young stars	Determining topic of the text	12	3
	Finding specific information	13	
	Synonym	14	
Favorite jersey	Determining topic of the topic	15	4
	Finding specific information	16, 17, 18	
Desta's family	Determining topic of the text	19	2
	Finding implicit information	20	

Additionally, the researcher divides the reading comprehension scores of the pupils into the following quantifiable categories :

Table 4

The Category of Students' Reading Achievement

The score of students	Category
80 – 100	High
70 – 79	Medium
0 – 69	Below minimum completeness criteria

Following the students' completion of the questionnaire, to analyze the data, the researcher had to examine the information and establish a correlation between the reading comprehension test and the questionnaire score.

The author employed the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient to examine the data (Soegiyono, 2011).

$$r_{xy} =$$

$$\frac{NZxy - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{$$

$$\sqrt{(NZx^2 - (\sum x)^2)(NZy^2 - (\sum y)^2)}$$

Note :

r = Coefficient of correlation between X variable and Y variable

N = Number of respondents

Σxy = The sum of the product of X and Y scores for each students

Σx = The sum of X scores

Σy = The sum of Y scores

Σx^2 = The sum of quadrate of each X scores

Σy^2 = The sum of quadrate of each

Y scores $(\Sigma x)^2$ = The sum of quadrate of each Σx scores $(\Sigma y)^2$ = The sum of quadrate of each Σy scores

Before testing the t_{count} the researcher made two hypotheses of signicance, they are:

Ha : there is a significant correlation between two variables Ho : there is no significant correlation between two variables The formulation of test :

- a. If $t_{count} > t_{table}$, it means that the null hypothesis is rejected and there is a significant correlation.
- b. If $t_{count} < t_{table}$, it means that the null hypothesis is accepted and there is no significant correlation.
- c. To interpret the index scores of "r" correlation, product moment (r_{xy}) usually used the interpretation such as follow:

Table 5
Product Moment Correlation Index

'r' value of product moment correlation (r_{xy})	Interpretation
0.00 - 0.20	Considered as no correlation
0.20 - 0.40	Low correlation
0.40 - 0.70	Medium correlation
0.70 - 0.90	Strong correlation
0.90 - 1.00	Very strong correlation

Moreover, the index correlation was clasified as positive correlation or negative correlation. (Creswell & Clark, 2018)states that when the values of two factors shift in the same direction, there is a positive correlation. Conversely, when two factors' values shift in the opposite direction, there is a negative correlation. A positive correlation indicates that when one factor's values rise, so do those of another. When one element's values decline, so do those of a second factor. Conversely, a negative correlation indicates that when one factor's values rise, the second factor's values fall.

RESULTS

In order to examine the connection between students' anxiety levels and their descriptive reading comprehension, the study used a quantitative correlational method. A test measuring reading comprehension and a questionnaire measuring anxiety were used to collect data. An analysis of student anxiety levels revealed a skewed distribution, the majority (46 students) exhibited high anxiety, while 5 students showed medium anxiety, and only 3 reported low anxiety. To derive a deeper understanding of these scores, the researcher employed SPSS to compute descriptive statistics such as the mean, median, mode, range (maximum and minimum scores), and standard deviation.

The average anxiety level among students was found to be 96.37, as determined by SPSS. Both the median and mode were 98, indicating a central tendency around this value. Scores varied significantly, from a lowest anxiety level of 64 to a highest of 125. The data also showed a standard deviation of 14.740 and a variance of 217.558. The mean of 96.37 implies that a majority of students fall into the high anxiety category.

Table 6

Reading Comprehension

The Score of Students	Frequency	Category
101 – 125	22	High
90 – 100	15	High
80 – 89	9	High
70 – 79	5	Medium
60 – 69	3	Low
Total	54	

The table indicates that most students (44) scored below the KKM (Minimum Completeness Criteria) in reading comprehension. Only 8 students achieved a medium score, and 2 students demonstrated high reading comprehension. The average reading comprehension score, according to the statistics table, is 54.17. 45 is the mode, and 55 is the median. Reading comprehension scores range from 20 to 95, with 95 being the best possible result. The variance is 212.972 and the standard deviation is 14.594. The average score on the reading comprehension test is 54.17, according to the results statistics above. This indicates that the majority of students' reading comprehension scores fell below the KKM.

In order to determine whether or not students' anxiety and their reading comprehension performance are related, the researcher employed SPSS. The data's outcome is displayed in the table that follows:

Table 7

Correlation Result

		Questionnaire	Reading test
Questionnaire	Pearson Correlation	1	-,407**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,002
	N	54	54
Reading test	Pearson Correlation	-,407**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,002	
	N	54	54

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The result is compared by t_{table} in the significance of 5% and 1% and $n=54$, the researcher. The t_{tables} of 5% = 0.279 and 1% = 0.361 are derived from $Df = 52$. This indicates that t_{count} exceeds t_{table} , which is $-3.213 > -0.279$ and $-3.213 > -0.361$. Thus, it is decided to accept the alternative hypothesis (H_a). In other words, pupils' anxiety levels and their reading comprehension performance are significantly correlated.

The chart unequivocally demonstrates a -0.407 negative association between pupils' reading comprehension scores and their anxiety levels. This indicates that reading comprehension scores are often positively correlated with reduced anxiety and negatively correlated with higher anxiety. The formula "r" yields -0.407. As can be seen in table 3.9, the index falls between 0.40 to 0.70, indicating a medium link between students' anxiety and their reading comprehension performance.

Discussion

This study sought to prove a connection between student anxiety and their reading comprehension scores. Although all four English language skills listening, speaking, reading, and writing are essential for learning a new language, reading is especially critical. This is because strong reading comprehension is a cornerstone of academic achievement, allowing students to gain substantial knowledge. An anxious reader might get stuck on an unknown word, re-read the same sentence repeatedly without processing its meaning, or be easily distracted, all of which disrupt the flow of comprehension (Matrix, 2004). Conversely, obstacles like anxiety, fear, or a lack of self-confidence can significantly hinder a learner's ability to understand what they read. Reading is a demanding task that requires significant working memory (Matrix, 2004). The brain's temporary workspace for processing information. A reader must simultaneously decode words, understand syntax, access vocabulary, make inferences, and connect the text to prior knowledge

The reading comprehension test served as the data collector tool. It was a multiple-choice exam. In order to address the research issues, the analysis has been completed. The result showed that majority of pupils had high levels of anxiousness. Besides, the majority

of students' reading comprehension scores fell below the KKM (Minimum Completeness Criteria). A correlation of -0.407 was found between students' anxiety and their reading comprehension performance. Table 3.9 indicates that the association is of medium strength. The author obtains $N.Sig = .002$ from the SPSS computation, where significance is less than 0.05 . So that, the alternate theory was the one that was approved.

This research found a statistically significant, medium negative correlation between student anxiety and reading comprehension. With strong statistical evidence ($N.Sig < 5\%$), we were able to accept our alternative hypothesis (H_a), confirming a genuine relationship between these two variables, and reject the null hypothesis (H_o), which proposed no such connection. A notable difference emerged when comparing these findings to previous study by (Herawati, 2017). Although both were quantitative correlational studies examining the link between student anxiety and reading comprehension (using questionnaires and tests on 54 eighth-grade students), The results showed no significant correlation. Her research suggested that changes in student anxiety levels did not affect their reading comprehension scores, which directly contrasts the outcome of the current study. These findings support and corroborate the conclusions drawn by (Astuti & Haris, 2018; Mardianti, Wijayati, & Murtadho, 2021; Nadilla, 2025; Pratiwi & Manurung, 2019; Rohman, 2003; Soares, Boyes, Parrila, & Badcock, 2023) ;(Fitrawati, Kamil, & Perrodin, 2023) which highlight the significant effect of anxiety and reading comprehension achievement.

This study's results are in line with those of (Snow, 2002) investigation, which likewise found a strong link between academic reading performance and anxiety. Similar findings were reached by their study, which involved 218 first-year Malaysian students learning English as a second language: worse academic grades were associated with higher student anxiety levels. The study's conclusion that there is a link between students' anxiety and their ability to comprehend what they read is consistent with previous research on the topic. This finding bolsters the idea that worry is a major affective element that can hinder students' comprehension skills. While general anxiety can be a factor, researchers have identified a more specific construct called Foreign Language Reading Anxiety (FLRA) (Matrix, 2004). This isn't just a fear of reading in general, but an anxiety specifically triggered by the act of reading in a non-native language. It stems from fears of Encountering unfamiliar vocabulary or grammatical structures. Sometimes misinterpreting the author's intended meaning.

The working memory (WM) interference theory refers to how competing information or mental processes can impair an individual's ability to store and manipulate information in their WM, with negative emotions sometimes acting as a source of this interference by reducing WM capacity or slowing processing. While the former focuses on language learning and the latter on general cognitive processing, both concepts illustrate

how emotions can negatively impact cognitive functions (Snow, 2002). In addition, this study offers a fresh contribution by examining the issue in the context of a private Madrasah Tsanawiyah, which has rarely been addressed in previous research. The findings reveal that students in this setting often experience shyness and fear of making mistakes when reading aloud, factors that may intensify their anxiety (Sari, 2017). This contextual insight highlights the importance of considering different school environments when addressing students' reading anxiety and comprehension.

A reader's working memory, which is crucial for processing and retaining information, can be severely hampered by anxiety. Students find it more difficult to store and recall information in their short-term memory as a result of this interference. Even though worry typically hinders language acquisition, it can occasionally serve as a motivation. According to (Savage, 1997) he differentiates between two types of anxiety; debilitating anxiety, which is detrimental, and facilitative anxiety, which is beneficial. The first, debilitating anxiety is a harmful form of anxiety that actively impedes the language learning process. Students affected by this type of anxiety frequently find tasks challenging, experiencing discomfort and a lack of confidence. A student's belief in their own ability to succeed in a reading task is a powerful buffer. Students with high self-efficacy may view a difficult passage as a manageable challenge rather than a threat, which can mitigate the anxiety response (Mohammadi, Biria, Koosha, & Shahsavari, 2013). This unease and self-doubt can significantly diminish their ability to concentrate, ultimately slowing down their overall progress in language acquisition. Proficient readers use active strategies like previewing the text, self-questioning, summarizing, and clarifying confusing points. Anxious readers often fail to use these higher-order strategies, reverting to passive, surface-level reading. Explicit instruction in these strategies can give students a sense of control, thereby reducing anxiety and improving comprehension (Mokhtarnia & Ghaffarzadeh, 2020) . Unlike its harmful counterpart, facilitative anxiety is a beneficial form of anxiety that positively impacts language learning. Competitiveness and anxiety in second language acquisition, indicates that facilitative anxiety can be a crucial factor for success. It acts as a motivator, encouraging students to study more diligently.

This research definitively concludes that student anxiety negatively impacts their reading comprehension. A primary concern in test anxiety research was highlighted by this investigation, regarding the contextual nature of the performance measures used in studies examining the impact of test anxiety on performance (Mokhtarnia & Ghaffarzadeh, 2020). Our findings reveal a clear inverse relationship when students experience high levels of anxiety, their reading comprehension scores tend to be low. Conversely, students with lower anxiety levels generally demonstrate strong reading comprehension performance.

This suggests that anxiety acts as a significant barrier, hindering a student's ability to effectively understand what they read.

CONCLUSION

The statistical analysis of this study showed a medium, negative correlation of -0.407 between students' anxiety levels and their reading comprehension scores. This means that as anxiety increases, reading comprehension tends to decrease. The correlation was also statistically significant, with a Sig value of .002, which is well below the 0.05 threshold. Therefore, we can accept the alternative hypothesis (H_a), indicating a genuine relationship between these variables, and reject the null hypothesis (H_0), which suggested no such relationship. It's clear that student anxiety negatively impacts reading comprehension. In simpler terms, higher anxiety levels are linked to poorer performance on reading comprehension tests, while lower anxiety is associated with stronger results. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on a private Madrasah Tsanawiyah context, which has rarely been explored in previous research. By highlighting students' shyness and fear of making mistakes when reading aloud, this study provides new insights into how school environment and cultural setting can shape the relationship between anxiety and reading comprehension. These findings are expected to help teachers in similar educational contexts design strategies to reduce students' anxiety and improve their comprehension achievement.

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