

Exploring the Relationship Between Teacher Demographics and the Frequency of Read-Aloud Practices in the Classroom

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Abstract

This study explores the relationship between teachers' (N = 168) demographic factors (gender, grade level, content area, age, and educational level) and the frequency of using read-alouds in their classrooms. Data analysis revealed significant relationships between the frequency of read-alouds and gender, grade level, and content area. Female teachers and those teaching primary or elementary grades, as well as English Language Arts teachers, were more likely to use read-alouds daily. The significance of read-alouds in secondary classrooms is emphasized, as read-alouds have the potential to expand adolescents' vocabulary, improve comprehension, develop critical thinking and listening skills, and foster a sense of community and social-emotional growth. However, no significant differences were found in relation to teacher age or educational level. The study underscores the importance of recognizing and implementing read-alouds across various content areas and grade levels to support students' literacy development and create a positive, engaging learning environment.

Keywords: read-alouds, teacher demographics, literacy development, classroom practices, secondary education

Introduction

Reading aloud to children has long been a common and highly encouraged practice in the elementary school classroom. Visit any primary or elementary-level classroom during the literacy block, and at some point, you will very likely witness the teacher and students gathered as a classroom community to enjoy a read-aloud experience together. Excitement will fill the air as the teacher models fluent, prosodic reading, asks questions to draw out students' thinking and promote discussion, and thinks out loud to solve challenges as they arise in the text. Students will be engaged and attentive, nearly all of them captivated by the read-aloud experience.

For most elementary students, the read-aloud experience is as inviting and familiar as reading on a family member's lap would be. But something happens in the middle grades, as many teachers abandon the read-aloud experience in favor of more independent reading (Albright & Ariail, 2005; Short, 2019). Similarly, in many content area classrooms, non-English Language Arts (ELA) teachers underutilize the read-aloud experience as well (Stead, 2014; Whitin & Wilde, 1992). Essentially, in certain classroom settings, the read-aloud becomes an neglected strategy, often disappearing from the repertoire of many teachers' instructional strategies toolboxes.

Read-alouds hold immense potential for secondary and non-ELA classrooms, as they can help students expand their vocabulary, improve comprehension, and develop critical thinking

and listening skills (Albright, 2002; Fisher et al., 2012; Szabo & Riley, 2020). These shared reading experiences create opportunities for discussion and collaboration, fostering a sense of community and social-emotional growth (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; McClure & Fullerton, 2017). Building on Rudine Sims-Bishop's (1990) notion of literature as "mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors" (p. ix), read-alouds can serve as powerful tools to reflect students' diverse backgrounds, provide glimpses into the lives of others, and even create dynamic interactions between different cultural worlds. By exposing students to diverse texts and perspectives, read-alouds contribute to a more inclusive and empathetic learning environment. For striving readers and multilingual learners, read-alouds provide valuable support by allowing them to understand the material better, develop listening skills, and enhance pronunciation and intonation (Kelly, 2022; Moussa & Koester, 2022). Teachers who model fluency and expression during read-alouds offer students the chance to hone their own reading proficiency, ultimately nurturing lifelong readers. Incorporating read-alouds into secondary classrooms not only supports students' literacy development but also furthers community building by acknowledging and celebrating the rich tapestry of identities present in the classroom (Trelease & Ciorgis, 2019). By recognizing the importance of read-alouds and implementing them across various content areas and grade levels, educators can help students become well-rounded, critical thinkers with a lifelong appreciation for reading.

Given the substantial impact of read-alouds on fostering literacy development and nurturing a love for reading, it is crucial to investigate the factors that influence teachers' decisions to integrate this strategy into their classrooms. Understanding the relationship between teachers' demographic factors and their frequency of employing read-alouds can offer valuable insights to inform professional development and promote the broader implementation of this effective instructional approach. By focusing on the frequency of read-alouds, we can establish a foundational understanding of current practices, identify potential disparities or trends, and lay the groundwork for future research on the underlying reasons and specific contexts that influence the implementation of read-alouds. Consequently, this study aims to explore the following research question: What is the relationship between teachers' demographic factors (gender, grade level, content area, age, and educational level) and the frequency of using read-alouds in their classrooms?

This paper is organized into six main sections to offer a comprehensive examination of our research question. Following this introduction, we present a literature review that covers the benefits of read-alouds and examines the existing research on teacher demographics influencing read-aloud practices. The Method section details the participants, instrumentation, and procedures used in the study. Our Findings section provides the data collected. The subsequent Discussion section explores the significance of these findings, outlines the study's limitations, and suggests avenues for future research. Finally, the Conclusion encapsulates the study's contributions to the broader understanding of read-aloud practices in diverse classroom settings.

Literature Review

The foundations of the read-aloud process can be traced back to Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the social and interactive dimensions of learning. In the

context of interactive read-alouds, the teacher and students collaboratively navigate texts, thus constructing knowledge and meaning through social interaction. Read-alouds are widely acknowledged for fostering literacy development, particularly in younger children, through enhancing vocabulary, comprehension, and critical thinking skills by introducing diverse literary and informational texts, all while cultivating a love for reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012; Pinkerton, 2018). Despite these benefits, read-alouds are often underutilized in secondary classrooms. This literature review aims to investigate the current research on read-aloud practices in secondary grades, focusing specifically on the relationship between teachers' demographic factors—such as gender, grade level, content area, age, and educational level—and their frequency of using read-alouds in the classroom. This literature review seeks to provide insights into potential barriers and facilitators of read-aloud implementation and identify areas for further research.

The review will initially discuss the benefits of read-alouds in promoting literacy development and student engagement, followed by an examination of current read-aloud practices across various grade levels and content areas. It will then delve into existing research on the connection between teacher demographics and read-aloud usage in the classroom. Through this brief analysis, the review aims to highlight the importance of read-alouds in secondary education and encourage further investigation into the factors influencing their implementation.

Benefits of Read-Alouds

Read-alouds offer an array of benefits contributing to students' literacy and academic development. They enhance comprehension by allowing students to focus on text meaning and structure and by providing opportunities for teachers to model effective reading strategies (Albright & Ariail, 2005; Harvey & Goudvis, 2007; McClure & Fullerton, 2017; Kaefer, 2020; Moussa & Koester, 2022). Additionally, read-alouds enrich vocabulary development through contextual exposure (Beck & McKeown, 2001; Fox, 2013; Linder, 2007). They also foster critical thinking skills by encouraging active participation, questioning, and collaborative discussions (Fisher et al., 2004; McClure & Fullerton, 2017; Morrison & Wlodarczyk, 2009). Read-alouds increase student engagement by creating suspense and fostering a positive classroom atmosphere (Barrentine, 1996; Harvey & Goudvis, 2007; McClure & Fullerton, 2017; Short, 2019; Szabo & Riley, 2020). Finally, they broaden students' exposure to diverse texts and perspectives, thereby enhancing cultural awareness and inclusivity (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; McClure & Fullerton, 2017; Short, 2019; Trelease & Ciorgis, 2019; Varsalona, 2008). When secondary educators incorporate read-alouds into their teaching strategies, they effectively support students in honing essential reading skills, nurturing critical thinking abilities, and stimulating engagement in the learning process. As a result, read-alouds hold the potential to transform secondary education across grade levels and content areas, fostering well-rounded, empathetic, and academically successful students.

Read-Alouds Across Secondary Grade Levels and Content Areas

Read-alouds are versatile instructional practices that can be integrated into various grade levels and content areas. This section will discuss the implementation of read-alouds in secondary education across grade levels and academic content areas, focusing on the differences in approaches and the unique benefits offered by read-alouds in specific content areas.

Middle School

In middle school, read-alouds have been shown to be effectively incorporated into daily instructional routines, contributing to a vibrant classroom community and nurturing an appreciation for reading (Albright & Ariail, 2005; Carr et al., 2001; Giorgis, 1999; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Linder, 2007; Richardson, 1994; Short, 2019; Varsalona, 2008). By allocating a few minutes each day for read-alouds, teachers can introduce students to new authors, genres, and themes, as evidenced by Giorgis (1999) and Richardson (1994), who both asserted that read-alouds fostered engagement, comprehension, and critical thinking skills for students in the middle grades. Furthermore, middle school students can benefit from interactive read-alouds that encourage discussion, collaboration, and active participation, as highlighted in McClure and Fullerton's (2017) study, which concluded that engaging students in collaborative conversations during read-alouds led to improved listening and speaking skills. Combining these findings, it is clear that read-alouds have significant potential to enhance the middle school classroom experience.

High School

Despite being less frequently utilized in high school settings, read-alouds have been shown to provide considerable benefits for students at this level (Carr et al., 2001; Fisher et al., 2004; Giorgis, 1999; Richardson, 1994; Warner et al., 2016). Read-alouds can serve as a tool to enhance high school students' comprehension of complex texts and foster critical thinking across a range of content areas (Warner et al., 2016). In their study, Warner and his colleagues demonstrated that high school teachers can use read-alouds effectively to support content learning, model effective reading strategies, and facilitate meaningful discussions around the text. Similarly, Fisher et al. (2004) found implementing read-alouds in high school classrooms contributed to students' improved understanding of challenging texts and their development of higher-order thinking skills. These findings indicate that read-alouds, when thoughtfully incorporated, can significantly benefit high school students' academic achievement and engagement with course material.

Content Areas

In ELA instruction, read-alouds serve as an essential tool to augment students' content knowledge, alongside broadening their exposure to various genres and deepening their

understanding of literary devices, themes, and the author's craft (Cervetti & Hiebert, 2019; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). Grounded in research highlighting the symbiotic relationship between content knowledge and reading comprehension (Cabell & Hwang, 2020; Connor et al., 2017), utilizing read-alouds in ELA can also equip students to engage with thematically and conceptually sophisticated texts. By selecting diverse and culturally relevant texts, teachers not only promote empathy, understanding, and civil discourse among students but also enrich their reading experiences (Bishop, 1990; Short, 2019). Similarly, in social studies instruction, read-alouds of informational texts can serve as vehicles for content-area literacy instruction, facilitating connections between historical events, concepts, and themes while enriching students' subject-specific knowledge (Connor et al., 2017; Stead, 2014;). These read-alouds, which could include primary sources, biographies, and historical fiction, allow for integrating content area literacy principles, further guiding students toward a more profound understanding of historical perspectives and stimulating critical thinking about past events and their significance.

In science instruction, read-alouds can effectively introduce new concepts, involve students in scientific inquiry, and foster a robust understanding of intricate ideas (Cervetti & Hiebert, 2019; Harvey & Goudvis, 2007;). These practices align with empirical findings that underscore the importance of building content knowledge to boost comprehension in science as well (Cabell & Hwang, 2020). By employing nonfiction texts, teachers can model how to read and analyze scientific information, bolstering students' abilities to navigate and comprehend scientific literature (Stead, 2014). While less common in mathematics, read-alouds can still provide substantial benefits, including an enhanced focus on content-area literacy, by introducing mathematical concepts through real-world contexts and engaging students in problem-solving activities (Barrentine, 1996; Connor et al., 2017; Whitin & Wilde, 1992). Incorporating math-related literature within a content area literacy framework can not only nurture students' mathematical thinking but also foster a positive attitude toward mathematics, further enhancing their learning experiences (Hong, 1996).

Read-aloud practices offer a versatile and powerful tool that can be seamlessly integrated across various grade levels and content areas in secondary education. By carefully tailoring read-alouds to the unique needs and interests of students in different disciplines, teachers can enhance student engagement, boost both content-area and reading comprehension, and foster critical thinking skills (Cabell & Hwang, 2020; Connor et al., 2017). Furthermore, incorporating diverse texts and perspectives in read-aloud selections enables students to broaden their worldview, develop empathy, and appreciate the richness of human experiences, ultimately contributing to their holistic academic growth.

Teacher Demographics and Read-Aloud Practices

Examining the relationship between teacher demographics and the frequency of read-aloud practices in the classroom is crucial for understanding the factors that influence the use of read-alouds in secondary education. A thorough analysis of these relationships may inform professional development initiatives, policy decisions, and targeted support for educators to maximize the benefits of read-alouds for students. In this section, we will delve into existing

research on how various teacher demographics, such as gender, grade level, content area, age, and educational level, may influence the implementation and effectiveness of read-aloud practices in secondary classrooms.

Gender

The relationship between teacher gender and the frequency of read-aloud practices holds implications for targeted professional development and support for educators. Research in this area is limited, though Boyd (2014) found no significant relationship between teacher gender and time spent on read-alouds. Other evidence suggests female teachers may adopt distinct approaches to teaching reading (Lam et al., 2010), which could influence their read-aloud practices. These variations can highlight potential gaps in training or resources for different genders in the teaching profession. Furthermore, understanding any disparities in read-aloud practices based on teacher gender can offer important insights for creating more inclusive and equitable teaching strategies.

Grade Level

While studies have indicated that read-alouds are more prevalent in elementary classrooms than in secondary classrooms (Albright & Ariail, 2005), it is essential to delve deeper into the potential differences in read-aloud practices between middle and high school teachers. According to DeJulio et al. (2022), read-aloud practices vary across grade levels regarding purposes, preparation, and implementation. For instance, teachers in preK–2 most frequently emphasized promoting comprehension and vocabulary development in their read-alouds. Teachers in grades 3–5 and 6–8, however, more frequently highlighted fluency in 2020. Additionally, high school teachers in 2015 and teachers in grades 3–5, 6–8, and 9–12 in 2020 saw read-alouds as a tool for teaching content knowledge. The variations may stem from differences in student needs, curriculum requirements, and pedagogical approaches across grade levels. Exploring these variations could help identify potential barriers to implementing read-alouds in secondary classrooms and offer valuable insights into how educators can adapt these practices to better suit the unique demands and expectations of middle and high school students. Furthermore, understanding the nuances in read-aloud practices across grade levels can contribute to developing tailored professional development and resources for educators, ultimately promoting more effective and engaging read-aloud experiences for students.

Content Area

Although the use of read-alouds has been documented across various content areas, such as ELA, social studies, science, and mathematics (Hong, 1996; Stead, 2014; Warner et al., 2016; Whitin & Wilde, 1992), the frequency and nature of read-aloud practices may vary depending on the content area. For instance, ELA teachers may use read-alouds to expose students to diverse texts, promote literary understanding, and facilitate discussions on themes and the author's craft.

In contrast, science teachers may utilize read-alouds to introduce new concepts, engage students in scientific inquiry, and model effective strategies for reading and analyzing scientific texts. Further research is needed to understand the unique challenges and opportunities for implementing read-alouds in various content areas, as well as to identify the most effective strategies for integrating read-alouds into different curricula. This knowledge could inform the development of discipline-specific professional development and resources, enabling educators to optimize their read-aloud practices and maximize the benefits for students across all disciplines (Albright & Ariail, 2005).

Age

Research on the relationship between teacher age and the frequency of read-aloud practices remains scarce, leaving a gap in understanding how different age groups may approach read-alouds in the classroom, though Morrison et al. (1998) and Jacobs et al. (2000) found significant differences among elementary teachers by teacher age regarding implementation of effective literacy practices, including read-alouds. Further investigation is needed to determine if younger or older teachers are more likely to implement read-alouds in their classrooms, and whether their approaches to read-aloud practices differ significantly. Potential factors that may contribute to variations in read-aloud practices across age groups could include teaching experience, familiarity with current educational research, or generational differences in pedagogical beliefs. Understanding these factors could help inform targeted professional development and support for teachers of different age groups, ensuring that all educators have the necessary tools and strategies to effectively implement read-alouds and maximize their benefits for students.

Educational Level

Teacher education level may influence the frequency of read-aloud practices in the classroom. Those with advanced degrees or specialized training may be more aware of the benefits of read-alouds and more likely to implement them. However, limited research exists on this relationship, although Connor et al. (2005) found students with warmer, more responsive, and higher-educated teachers showed improved vocabulary and decoding skills, with these teachers more likely to read aloud to their students. Further research is needed to confirm this relationship and investigate potential differences based on teacher education levels. Examining the impact of teachers' educational backgrounds on read-aloud practices can provide insights into barriers or facilitators and inform targeted professional development, ensuring all teachers effectively utilize read-alouds for enhanced student learning outcomes.

Investigating the relationship between teacher demographics and read-aloud practices can yield valuable insights into the factors that influence the use of read-alouds in secondary education. Understanding these relationships is crucial for optimizing the implementation and effectiveness of read-aloud practices in the classroom. Further research is needed to explore these connections and elucidate the potential impact of various demographic factors on read-aloud practices. In the following methodology section, we will outline the research design and

data collection methods used to examine these relationships, providing a foundation for a deeper analysis of the factors influencing read-aloud practices.

Method

Participants

A total of 860 eligible teachers from two southeastern school districts near our university were invited to participate in the study. Out of these, 279 accessed the survey link, resulting in a response rate of approximately 32%. Among the respondents, 189 participants completed the survey; however, imputation of missing values was not feasible as incomplete responses only contained demographic information. After excluding eight participants who did not consent to the study, the final sample size comprised 181 teachers. Of these, 13 were not teaching in PK–12 schools, leaving 168 participants for analysis. The majority of participants were female (82.7%), taught primary or elementary grades (66.7%), specialized in ELA (68.5%), held a master’s degree or higher (68%), and had over a decade of teaching experience (60.1%). Participant demographics are provided in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Demographic Variable	Percentage	<i>n</i>
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	17.3%	29
Female	82.7%	139
<i>Grade Level</i>		
Primary and Elementary	66.7%	112
Middle School	14.9%	25
High School	18.5%	31
<i>ELA Teacher Status</i>		
Yes	68.5%	115
No	31.5%	53

Educational Level

Bachelor's	31%	52
Master's or Doctorate	68%	116

Years of Teaching Experience

0–10	39.3%	66
11–20	34.5%	58
Over 21	25%	42

Instrumentation

The survey used in this study was adapted from the Reading Teaching Efficacy Instrument (RTEI; Szabo & Mokhtari, 2004) to investigate the relationship between teachers' demographic factors and the frequency of using read-alouds in their classrooms. The original RTEI consists of two factors: teachers' self-efficacy in teaching reading and their ability to influence student reading development, with internal consistencies of .70 and .83, respectively. Our adapted survey focused on teacher demographics (6 items) and included a question regarding the frequency of using read-alouds in their classrooms. This question on the frequency of read-aloud implementation is the only question we analyzed for this study.

To ensure the survey's validity, it was reviewed by literacy content experts and pilot-tested with 22 graduate students enrolled in graduate-level literacy education classes at a comprehensive university in the southeastern U.S. Based on feedback, adjustments were made to the survey's wording and content. The survey's reliability was measured using Cronbach's alpha, resulting in a value of .86. This adapted survey allowed us to examine the relationship between teachers' demographic factors and their frequency of implementing read-alouds in their classrooms.

Data Collection

Data was collected from in-service teachers in two southeastern U.S. school districts. The districts were selected due to their proximity to the researchers' university and existing partnerships. The survey, created using the Qualtrics platform, aimed to examine the relationship between teachers' demographic factors and the frequency of using read-alouds in their classrooms. The survey distribution process involved emailing the study introduction and survey link to ELA coordinators in both school districts, who then forwarded the email to all principals. Principals subsequently shared the email with teachers at their schools. The email outlined the study's purpose, assured anonymity, and clarified that participation was voluntary with no right

or wrong answers. Participants were informed that the survey would take approximately 15 minutes to complete and that they could contact the lead researcher with any questions. To encourage participation, the research team sent follow-up emails to potential participants several weeks after the initial distribution, reminding them about the study, resending the survey link, and emphasizing the research's importance and benefits of participating.

Data Analysis

IBM SPSS 27 was used for all data analyses. To answer the research question regarding the relationship between teacher demographic factors and the frequency of using read-alouds in their classrooms, a Pearson chi-square test of independence was performed (Pearson, 1900). The demographic variables included gender (male versus female), grade level (primary/elementary versus middle school/high school), ELA teacher status (yes versus no), teacher educational level (bachelor's versus master's/doctorate), and years of teaching experience (0–10 years versus 11–20 years). The frequency of read-alouds was categorized as weekly, daily, not often, or never. To ensure adequate sample sizes for analysis, the original grade level categories primary and elementary were combined, and the original degree categories master's and doctorate were combined. For the variables of gender, grade level, and ELA teacher status, post hoc analyses with the Bonferroni correction were employed to identify specific differences. The Bonferroni correction adjusts for multiple comparisons by dividing the p -value by the number of tests (Snijders & Bosker, 2011).

Findings

As shown in Tables 2 and 3 below, results demonstrated a significant relationship between gender and the frequency of read-aloud usage, $\chi^2(4, 168) = 16.643, p = .002$. Post hoc tests with Bonferroni correction revealed that the number of female teachers using read-alouds daily ($n = 68$) was significantly higher than expected ($n = 58.7$), while the number of females using read-alouds infrequently or never ($n = 34$) was significantly lower than expected ($n = 41.4$). Conversely, the number of male teachers utilizing read-alouds daily ($n = 3$) was significantly lower than expected ($n = 9.7$), and the number using them infrequently or never ($n = 14$) was significantly higher than expected ($n = 6.8$). No significant difference was found between weekly read-aloud usage and gender.

A significant relationship was also found between grade level and read-aloud frequency, $\chi^2(4, 168) = 44.102, p < .001$. Post hoc tests with Bonferroni correction showed that middle school teachers using read-alouds daily ($n = 2$) were significantly fewer than expected ($n = 10.6$), and those using them infrequently or never ($n = 15$) were significantly more than expected ($n = 7.4$). Primary and elementary teachers using read-alouds daily ($n = 65$) were significantly more than expected ($n = 47.3$), and those using them infrequently or never ($n = 17$) were significantly fewer than expected ($n = 33.7$). High school teachers implementing read-alouds daily ($n = 4$) were significantly fewer than expected ($n = 13.1$), and those using them infrequently or never ($n = 18$) were significantly more than expected ($n = 9.2$). No significant differences were found between weekly read-aloud usage and grade level.

Table 2*Frequency of Read-Aloud Practices Across Teacher Demographics*

	Weekly	Daily	Not Often	Total	<i>p</i> -value
Gender					.002*
Females	38 (27.3%)	67 (48.2%)	34 (24.4%)	139	
Males	6 (26%)	3 (13%)	14 (60.9%)	23	
Grade Level					.000*
Primary and Elementary	30 (26.8%)	65 (58%)	17 (15.2%)	112	
Middle School	8 (32%)	2 (8%)	15 (60%)	25	
High School	9 (29%)	4 (12.9%)	18 (58%)	31	
ELA Teacher					.000*
No	13 (24.5%)	6 (11.3%)	34 (64.2%)	53	
Yes	34 (29.6%)	65 (56.5%)	16 (14%)	115	
Age					.386
0–10	19 (28.8%)	33 (50%)	14 (21.2%)	66	
11–20	17 (28.9%)	21 (35.6%)	21 (35.6%)	59	
Over 21	11 (26.2%)	17 (40.5%)	14 (33.3%)	42	
Educational Level					.649
Masters or higher	32 (27.6%)	47 (40.5%)	37 (31.9%)	116	
Bachelors	15 (28.8%)	24 (46.2%)	13 (25%)	52	

Table 3*Post Hoc Analysis Results Using Bonferroni Correction*

		Weekly	Daily	Not Often	Total
Gender					
Females	Observed	38	67	34	139
	Expected	38.9	58.7	41.4	139
	<i>p</i> -value	.687	.000*	.001*	
Males	Observed	6	3	14	23
	Expected	6.4	9.7	6.8	23
	<i>p</i> -value	.828	.002*	.000*	
Grade Level					
Primary and Elementary	Observed	30	65	17	112
	Expected	31.3	47.3	33.3	112
	<i>p</i> -value	.627	.000*	.000*	
Middle School	Observed	8	2	15	25
	Expected	7.0	10.6	7.4	25
	<i>p</i> -value	.627	.000*	.000*	
High School	Observed	9	4	18	31
	Expected	8.7	13.1	9.2	31
	<i>p</i> -value	.885	.000*	.000*	
ELA Teacher					
No	Observed	13	6	34	53
	Expected	14.8	22.4	15.8	53
	<i>p</i> -value	.499	.000*	.000*	
Yes	Observed	34	65	16	115

Expected	32.2	48.6	34.2	115
<i>p</i> -value	.499	.000*	.000*	

A significant relationship was found between ELA teachers and read-aloud frequency, $\chi^2(2, 168) = 48.634, p < .001$. Post hoc tests with Bonferroni correction indicated ELA teachers using read-alouds daily ($n = 65$) were significantly more than expected ($n = 48.6$), and those using them infrequently or never ($n = 16$) were significantly fewer than expected ($n = 34.2$). For non-ELA teachers, the number using read-alouds daily ($n = 6$) was significantly lower than expected ($n = 22.4$), and those using them infrequently or never ($n = 34$) were significantly more than expected ($n = 15.8$). No significant differences were found between weekly read-aloud usage and ELA teacher status. Additionally, no significant differences were found between age and read-aloud frequency, $\chi^2(2, 167) = 4.152, p = .386$, or educational level and read-aloud frequency, $\chi^2(2, 168) = .864, p = .649$.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the frequency of read-aloud implementation as a literacy practice. Read-alouds have been shown to be an effective strategy for improving students' reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and engagement with text (e.g., Kaefer, 2020; McClure & Fullerton, 2017; Moussa & Koester, 2022; Szabo & Riley, 2020); however, their use in secondary classrooms appears to be underutilized (Albright & Ariail, 2005; Short, 2019). In this section, we will discuss the findings of our research, which revealed significant relationships between the use of read-alouds and teacher gender, grade level, and content matter (ELA vs. non-ELA teachers), while no significant relationships were found regarding age or educational level. We will interpret these findings, connect them to previous literature, explore their implications for practice and policy, address limitations, and suggest directions for future research.

Significant Relationships

Gender and Read-Alouds

Our findings revealed a significant relationship between gender and the use of read-alouds. Female teachers were found to use read-alouds daily more frequently than their male counterparts, while male teachers were more likely to report using read-alouds less often or never. It's important to note that most of our participants were female (82.7%), which could potentially influence these findings, though the statistical tests we employed took this discrepancy into consideration. This disparity may be attributed to differences in teaching styles, beliefs about the effectiveness of read-alouds, or even the socialization of gender roles, where female teachers might be more inclined to adopt nurturing and supportive approaches to teaching (Lam et al., 2010), which read-alouds can exemplify. Moreover, multiple studies have shown

that reading is frequently considered a feminine activity (e.g., Espinoza & Strasser, 2020; Nootens et al., 2019; Nowicki & Lopata, 2017), which could potentially influence male teachers' perceptions and practices. The significant relationship between gender and read-aloud usage found in our study adds a new dimension to the literature. While there is limited research exploring gender differences in read-aloud practices (e.g., Boyd, 2014), this overrepresentation of female participants might emphasize the need for additional studies with a more balanced gender distribution. Further investigation could lead to a better understanding of the underlying factors contributing to these differences and inform targeted professional development opportunities to support all educators in integrating read-alouds into their instruction.

Grade Level and Read-Alouds

We also found a significant relationship between grade level and the use of read-alouds. Primary and elementary teachers reported using read-alouds daily more frequently than middle school and high school teachers. It should be noted that most participants in this study taught at the primary or elementary levels (66.7%), which could have influenced these findings, though the statistical tests we employed took this discrepancy into consideration. This finding is consistent with the common belief that read-alouds are more applicable to younger students, while older students are expected to rely more on independent reading (Albright & Ariail, 2005; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). However, previous research has shown that read-alouds can be beneficial for students of all ages, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of complex texts (Barrentine, 1996; DeJulio et al., 2022; Trelease & Ciorgis, 2019). The overrepresentation of primary and elementary educators in our sample may underscore the need for future studies to include a more balanced distribution across grade levels. The underutilization of read-alouds in middle and high school classrooms may represent a missed opportunity for enhancing literacy instruction.

Content Area and Read-Alouds

Our results indicated a significant relationship between content area and the use of read-alouds, with ELA teachers using read-alouds daily more often than non-ELA teachers. This is not surprising given the direct connection between read-alouds and literacy development. However, the benefits of read-alouds are not limited to ELA classrooms; they can also support learning in other content areas by promoting critical thinking, building background knowledge, and engaging students with diverse perspectives (Stead, 2014; Warner et al., 2016; Whitin & Wilde, 1992). The relatively infrequent use of read-alouds among non-ELA teachers suggests there may be a need for greater awareness and professional development opportunities to help these educators integrate read-alouds into their instructional practices (Albright & Ariail, 2005). This finding also underscores the need for interdisciplinary approaches to literacy instruction and the integration of read-alouds in non-ELA classrooms to foster cross-curricular connections and promote critical thinking (Hong, 1996).

Non-Significant Relationships

Teacher Age and Educational Level

This study did not find significant relationships between the use of read-alouds and the age or educational level of the teachers surveyed. While these non-significant findings could point to other influencing factors such as experience, professional development, or personal beliefs about teaching and learning (Abernathy-Dyer et al., 2013; Ciampa & Gallagher, 2018), they may also suggest the presence of a fixed mindset toward the utility of read-alouds (Dweck, 2006). Such a mindset could be resistant to change irrespective of age or educational background, thereby influencing the use—or lack thereof—of this instructional strategy. These findings underscore the importance of ongoing professional development aimed not only at imparting evidence-based literacy practices like read-alouds but also at addressing underlying mindsets that may hinder their adoption. Further research is warranted to explore these factors in more depth to better understand the influences shaping educators’ decisions to utilize read-alouds in their classrooms.

Implications for Practice and Policy

The findings of this study have important implications for educators, schools, and policymakers in the field of literacy and reading education. The underutilization of read-alouds in secondary classrooms, particularly among male teachers, middle and high school teachers, and non-ELA teachers, highlights the need for targeted efforts to promote the use of this effective literacy practice. One underlying issue that may deter secondary, content-specific teachers from using read-alouds is their belief they are responsible for teaching only their specific subject matter rather than literacy. This suggests a need for a paradigm shift toward viewing all educators responsible for teaching discipline-appropriate literacy practices, irrespective of their content area (Gillis, 2014). Schools and districts should provide ongoing professional development opportunities focused on the benefits of read-alouds and best practices for implementing them in secondary classrooms (Albright & Ariail, 2005). These training sessions should emphasize the value of read-alouds for students of all ages and across all content areas and equip content-specific secondary educators to question and potentially reframe their existing beliefs about their role as disciplinary literacy teachers (Gillis, 2014; McClure & Fullerton, 2017; Short, 2019; Warner et al., 2016).

Pre-service teacher education programs should incorporate read-aloud techniques and their benefits in their curriculum, ensuring that future educators are well-prepared to utilize this literacy practice in their classrooms (Savitz et al., 2019). Providing pre-service teachers with hands-on experience in using read-alouds across various grade levels and content areas can help foster their confidence and competence in implementing this practice. Furthermore, policymakers should consider the importance of read-alouds when developing and implementing literacy policies and curriculum guidelines (Gabriel, 2022). Encouraging the use of read-alouds as an integral part of literacy instruction can help create a culture that values and prioritizes this practice, leading to improved student outcomes.

Districts and schools should allocate resources to support the use of read-alouds in secondary classrooms. This may include purchasing diverse and engaging texts that appeal to students at different grade levels and in various content areas, as well as providing access to audio recordings and digital resources that facilitate read-alouds. Moreover, encouraging collaboration among educators, both within and across content areas, can help promote the sharing of effective read-aloud strategies and foster a supportive environment for implementing this practice (Abernathy-Dyer et al., 2013). Establishing mentorship programs where experienced teachers can model and provide guidance on read-aloud techniques can further enhance educators' skills and confidence in using read-alouds.

By addressing these implications, stakeholders in the field of literacy education can work together to promote the effective use of read-alouds in secondary and non-ELA classrooms. Shifting the educational paradigm to view all teachers as disciplinary literacy educators can significantly contribute to this effort. Prioritizing read-alouds as an essential component of literacy instruction will not only contribute to improved student outcomes but also help to cultivate a lifelong love of reading among students. Additionally, fostering a collaborative and supportive educational environment where all educators, regardless of content area or grade level, are encouraged to utilize read-alouds can lead to the development of well-rounded, critically thinking students who are better equipped to navigate the complexities of the world around them. By investing in these strategies, we can enhance literacy education and ensure that all students have access to the myriad benefits that read-alouds can offer.

Limitations and Future Research

While this study provides valuable insights into the use of read-alouds in secondary classrooms, acknowledging its limitations and identifying areas for future research are essential. First, the study utilized a self-report survey to collect data on teachers' read-aloud practices. Self-report measures may be content to social desirability bias (Arnold & Feldman, 1981), where participants may over-report or under-report their use of read-alouds based on their perceptions of what is expected or desired. Future research could employ direct observations of classroom instruction or in-depth interviews to obtain a more accurate representation of read-aloud practices.

In addition, the sample was limited to a specific region and may not be representative of the broader population of secondary-level teachers. Future studies should aim to include a more diverse sample of educators, considering factors such as geographic location, school type, and socioeconomic background of the student population, to better understand the generalizability of the findings. Moreover, this study primarily focused on the frequency of read-aloud usage, without examining the quality or effectiveness of read-aloud implementation. Future research should explore how various read-aloud strategies and techniques impact student learning and engagement. This could include investigating the effects of different text types, interactive elements, and teacher questioning techniques on student outcomes.

More robust studies will be necessary to probe the significant and non-significant relationships we found. For example, we detected a significant relationship between gender and the use of read-alouds, which warrants further investigation. Future research should delve deeper

into the factors contributing to this relationship, such as differences in teaching styles, beliefs about read-alouds, or gender role socialization. Longitudinal studies or experimental designs could be employed to explore the impact of targeted professional development or interventions aimed at addressing these gender differences in read-aloud practices.

Conclusion

This study has provided insights into the prevalence and factors associated with the use of read-alouds as a literacy practice across grade levels and content areas. Our findings revealed significant relationships between the use of read-alouds and gender, grade level, and content matter, while no significant relationships were found regarding age or educational level. These results highlight the need for targeted efforts to promote the use of read-alouds, a proven effective literacy strategy, across secondary and non-ELA classrooms. The implications of our findings for educators, schools, and policymakers are substantial, emphasizing the importance of ongoing professional development, pre-service teacher education, resource allocation, and collaboration in fostering a supportive environment for the implementation of read-alouds. By prioritizing read-alouds as an essential component of literacy instruction, we can contribute to improved student outcomes and cultivate a lifelong love of reading among students.

Although our study has limitations, it has laid the groundwork for further research in this area. Future studies should aim to address these limitations and explore the factors contributing to the significant relationships identified, the quality and effectiveness of read-aloud implementation, and the impact of targeted interventions on read-aloud practices. A more comprehensive understanding of these aspects will enable educators and policymakers to make informed decisions and develop strategies to ensure all students have access to the myriad benefits read-alouds can offer.

Ultimately, this study underscores the potential of read-alouds as a powerful tool in enhancing literacy education and fostering well-rounded students who think critically about the world around them. By investing in the strategies outlined in this paper, stakeholders can work together to create an educational landscape that values and prioritizes read-alouds, thus paving the way for improved literacy outcomes for students in secondary and non-ELA classrooms.

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