



## İlkokul Öğrencilerinin Okur Benlik Algısı ve Okuduğunu Anlama Becerileri Arasındaki İlişki<sup>1</sup>

### The Relationship Between Primary School Students' Reader Self-Perception and Reading Comprehension Skills<sup>1</sup>

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**ÖZ:** Okuma motivasyonunun temel unsurlarından biri olan okur benlik algısı, bir okur olarak kişinin kendini ne kadar yeterli bulduğuyla ilgili bir kavramdır. İlkokul öğrencilerinin okumayla ilgili öz/ benlik algılarının bilinmesi okuduğunu anlama becerisinin geliştirilmesi için önemlidir. Bu araştırmada, ilkökul öğrencilerinin okur benlik algıları ve okuduğunu anlama becerileri arasındaki ilişkinin tespit edilmesi amaçlanmıştır. Araştırma ilişkisel tarama modelinde gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmanın çalışma grubunu, bir devlet okulunun ilkökul 2, 3 ve 4. sınıflarında öğrenim gören 194 kız, 188 erkek olmak üzere toplamda 382 öğrencisi oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmada veri toplama aracı olarak; öğrencilerin okuduğunu anlama becerilerini ölçmek için sınıf düzeylerine göre ayrı ayrı hazırlanan "Okuduğunu Anlama Testi" ve öğrencilerin okumaya yönelik algılarını belirlemek için ise "Okur Benlik Algısı Ölçeği" kullanılmıştır. Verilerin analizinde t-testi, tek yönlü ANOVA ve Pearson korelasyon katsayısı kullanılmıştır. Araştırma sonuçlarına göre; kız öğrencilerin okur benlik algı düzeylerinin erkek öğrencilerden daha yüksek olduğu ve sınıf düzeyleri karşılaştırıldığında ise en yüksek okur benlik algı düzeyinin dördüncü sınıf öğrencilerine ait olduğu görülmüştür. Ayrıca ilkökul öğrencilerinin okur benlik algı düzeyleri ile okuduğunu anlama becerileri arasında pozitif yönlü ve istatistiksel olarak düşük düzeyde anlamlı bir ilişki bulunmuştur. Araştırmada ulaşılan sonuçlardan hareketle birtakım öneriler sunulmuştur.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** Okur benlik algısı, okuduğunu anlama, ilkökul öğrencileri

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**ABSTRACT:** Reader self-perception, that is one of the basic elements of the reading motivation, is a notion how many to find adequate oneself as a reader. To know the students' reading self-perception levels at primary school is essential to develop reading comprehension skill. This study aimed to ascertain the relationship between primary school students' reader self-perception and their reading comprehension skills. The study was conducted in line with the correlational survey model. The sample group consisted of a total of 382 students, 194 girls and 188 boys, studying in the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> grades of a public school. As a data collection tool in the research; The "Reading Comprehension Test", which was prepared separately according to the grade levels, was used to measure the reading comprehension skills of the students, and the "Reader Self-Perception Scale" was used to determine the students' perceptions of reading. T-test, one-way ANOVA and Pearson correlation coefficient were used in the analysis of the data. The results showed that female students' reader self-perception levels were higher than those of male students, and that the fourth-grade students had the highest reader self-perception level, when the grade levels were compared. In addition, a weak, positive, and significant correlation was found between primary school students' reader self-perception levels and their reading comprehension skills. Based on the results of the study, some suggestions are presented.

**Keywords:** Reader self-perception, reading comprehension, primary school students

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the basic language skills, developed and used throughout life. For those who desire to be knowledgeable and cultured, to constantly renew themselves, to think correctly, to write and speak correctly and beautifully by learning how to achieve a clear and effective way of expressing oneself, to improve themselves, and establish healthy relationships with the society (Kızgın & Baştuğ, 2020) as well as to increase their academic success in other disciplines, reading is an indispensable ability (Karatay, 2011). For that reason, the foundations of teaching how to read should be laid solid in primary school and relevant studies should be conducted on how to better enable students to gain the reading skill (Baştuğ & Çelik, 2015).

Reading is also defined as the process of construal in an organized environment, based on effective communication between the author and the reader by using prior knowledge, in line with an appropriate method and purpose (Akyol, 2019). Likewise, the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) has defined the reading skill as “the ability to understand and use those written language forms required by society and/or valued by the individual” (Mullis, Martin, Kennedy & Foy, 2007: 3). As can be clearly understood, reading is indeed a complex and multidimensional structure in which more than one factor is involved. These factors can be basically grouped perceptual/affective, psycholinguistic, and cognitive abilities (Adams, 1990). Teachers and researchers of reading comprehension tend to focus more on the cognitive aspects of reading, such as fluent reading and reading comprehension (Baştuğ & Çelik, 2015). However, researches show that there has been an emphasis on the fact that reading is not only a cognitive but also an affective and social process, in addition to the presence of considerable attention drawn to the importance of developing such affective and social dimensions in order to improve reading skills (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Ülper, Yaylı & Karakaya, 2013; Wang & Guthrie, 2004).

Considering the fact that reading is an activity that children may choose to do or not to do at all (Yıldız, 2013), it is necessary to develop positive attitude towards reading by arousing curiosity, love and desire first inside the family, and then from kindergarten or primary school onwards (Balci, Uyar & Büyükkiz, 2012; İleri-Aydemir & Öztürk, 2013; Ürün-Karahan & Taşdan, 2016). As for the reason for this, it is believed that students who like to read and have a high motivation to do it can acquire necessary reading comprehension skills at the desired level (Yurtbakan, Erdoğan & Erdoğan, 2020). It is expected that such students are likely to spend more time on reading (Baştuğ & Çelik, 2015). The reading skill is likely to develop in proportion to the time devoted to reading, and thus individuals' reading comprehension levels increase with the development of reading skills (Dikmen & Kartal, 2021). In addition to the concepts of interest, attitude, curiosity and motivation, which are regarded within the affective dimensions of reading, it should be considered necessary to include the concept of reader self-perception in studies.

The social cognitive model developed by Bandura mainly emphasizes that learning is perceived not only as a cognitive process, but also as an affective and social process (Bandura, 1986). According to the model, individuals tend to develop their own self-perceptions regarding their emotions, thoughts and behaviour apart from being influenced by biological and environmental events. In other words, individuals not only interact with the social environment, but also regulate and manage these emotions, thoughts and behaviours based on their particular self-perceptions. According to Bandura (1989), the stronger the individuals' self-efficacy beliefs, the higher the goals they will choose for themselves and the higher their commitment to achieving these goals. Individuals with low self-efficacy, however, tend to believe that they cannot possibly cope with difficulties in a particular area. Thus, they begin to slow down their efforts in this area or give up trying altogether. The reader-self concept, which can be defined

as the reading-oriented self-confidence, can also be considered as a concept that develops in parallel with the self-efficacy/self-perception or self in the social cognitive theory of whose theoretical foundations were laid by Bandura. In this sense, the reader self-concept determines how individuals feel about themselves as readers, whether they choose to read or not, how much effort they will devote to reading and how much they will work to make sense of the text, and how they see themselves as a reader (Henk & Melnick, 1992). According to Schunk (1991) and Zimmerman and Ringle (1981), performance in all aspects of life can be motivated or inhibited by self-perceptions. In this respect, there seem to be direct connections between readers' self-perceptions and subsequent reading behaviours, habits, and attitudes.

In other words, how individuals feel about themselves as a reader can clearly influence whether they are willing to read, how much effort they put in reading, and how persistently comprehension can be sustained (Henk & Melnick, 1995). Moreover, similar to the social cognitive theory, an individual's high or low self-perception in reading is influential on any possible reading activity. It can be regarded that individuals with higher self-perception about reading may be more willing to read and turn out to be more successful in reading, while individuals with lower self-perception may be more reluctant to read, and accordingly, be less successful when it comes to reading (Yıldız & Bulut, 2016). In a similar sense, people with high reading self-efficacy perceptions are likely to be more successful in reading comprehension and handling difficult texts than those with low self-efficacy (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Solheim, 2011; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). Research has shown that children who describe themselves as good readers in the reading process use reading strategies efficiently, manage to cope with reading problems, and are more active in the act of construing (Henk & Melnick, 1995; Sağırılı & Okur, 2017). To the contrary, studies have also demonstrated that children who do not consider themselves as good readers are indeed more reluctant and careless in the reading process (Henk, Marinek & Melnick, 2012).

In order to improve effective comprehension and reading proficiency, it is necessary for readers to have a developed sense of self-efficacy, apart from other factors (attitude, vocabulary, prior knowledge, etc.) (Guthrie & Wigfield, 1999). People's perception of self-efficacy towards reading is a frequently used clue used to evaluate their higher-order comprehension skills (Kwon & Linderholm (2014). For that reason, research indicates that those who see themselves as good readers generally show a high level of comprehension performance, while those who consider themselves as poor readers seem to have a low level of comprehension performance (Kwon & Linderholm, 2014). It should be noted that one must be aware of one's own self in reading as well as controlling and developing it in order to reach a high level of reading comprehension.

The relevant literature review has revealed the presence of previous studies conducted on the concept of reader self-perception. Some of these studies, for example, consist of development and adaptation studies of reader self-perception scale at different grade levels (Henk & Melnick, 1995; Yaylı & Duru, 2008; Yıldız & Bulut, 2016; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). In other studies, the concept of reader self-perception is one of the variables investigated (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Baştuğ & Çelik, 2015; Byrne, 1986; İnnalı & Aydın, 2014; Karakoç-Öztürk, 2015; Meece, Glienke & Burg, 2006; Ünal, 2012; Sağırılı & Okur, 2017). It should also be noted that there are some studies that did not focus on the concepts of reading comprehension and reader self-perception, but indirectly reached conclusions about their relationship (Bailey, 2009; Courtenay-Brown, 1992; Esmer, 2019; Katzir, Lesaux & Kim, 2009; Kwon & Linderholm, 2014; Phillips, 2002; Smith et al., 2012). Such studies reporting that reader self-perception is an important predictor of reading or reading comprehension (De Naeghel, van Keer, Vansteenkiste & Rosseel, 2012; Katzir et al., 2009; Koca, 2020) have often necessitated to do more research directly addressing these two concepts. According to Katzir et al. (2009), the relationship

between self-perception and reading comprehension should be studied in more detail. Given the results of the previous studies, the most overlapping study with the current study in terms of scope belongs to Altunkaya (2018), who dealt with the relationship between reader self-perception and reading comprehension, by involving eighth grade students studying at secondary school. The fact that the said study employed different data collection tools and did not include primary school students made the present study stand out as important and different from that study. When evaluated in general, this study is believed to contribute to the research field by closing a clear gap, since there is no study in the literature that overlaps with the current study in all its dimensions in order to deal with the reader self-perception at primary school level. In this connection, the aim of this study is to determine the relationship between primary school students' reader self-perception and reading comprehension skills. Accordingly, answers to the following research questions will be sought:

- (1) Do reader self-perception levels of 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade students studying at primary school differ by gender?
- (2) Do reader self-perception levels of 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade students studying at primary school differ by grade level?
- (3) Is there a relationship between the reader self-perception levels of primary school 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade students and their reading comprehension skills?

## 2. METHOD

### 2.1. Research Design

This study examined the relationships between primary school students' reader self-perceptions and their reading comprehension skills and was conducted in conformity with the correlational survey model. This model is used to determine the relationship between two or more variables and the level of this relationship (Creswell, 2003). No intervention was made on the groups with which the study was conducted, and the existing situation was described as it was. The reader self-perceptions and reading comprehension levels of 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade students were compared and the correlation between the two variables was revealed.

### 2.2. Sample Group

The sample group consisted of 382 students in total who were then studying in the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades of primary schools in Konya province, Türkiye. Convenience sampling technique was used because the volunteer participants were selected in the schools where the researchers could reach them easily and quickly. The purpose of this sampling technique is to select the participants on the basis of convenience by including the volunteers only (Patton, 2014). For that reason, utmost attention was paid to select from among a certain number of students from schools in the middle socioeconomic level and from each grade level to ensure maximum diversity in student selection. Table 1 presents the data regarding the sample group.

**Table 1:** Distribution of the Students Participating in the Study by Gender and Grade Levels

Gender \ Grade level	Grade level			Total
	2	3	4	
Female	53	68	73	194
Male	47	74	67	188
Total	100	142	140	382

Table 1 demonstrates that there are a total of 382 students in the sample group, approximately 51% (N=194) of whom are female students, while 49% (N=188) are male.

### 2.3. Data Collection Tools and Methods

#### 2.3.1. Assessment of the Reading Comprehension Skill

In order to determine the reading comprehension levels of the students, 10 narrative texts were used by selecting them from the supplementary textbooks approved by the Education and Discipline Board of the Ministry of Education, for each grade level. The selected 10 texts were sent to eight people consisting of field experts and teachers. The experts were presented the texts and asked to check and evaluate them in terms of language and expression, content and messages, and of their suitability for the grade levels. A text with the highest score and corresponding to each grade level was chosen by the experts for the procedure. As an example, the narrative texts named “Competitor Seagull” was used for 2<sup>nd</sup> graders, “Cracked Bucket” for 3<sup>rd</sup> graders, and “Gum Tree” for 4<sup>th</sup> graders. Reading comprehension questions were then prepared for the texts. Each text consisted of eight questions, four of which were in the form of simple reading comprehension and four in deep comprehension. Experts were consulted to confirm whether the prepared questions were compatible with Barrett’s Taxonomy. Table 2 presents the samples of questions prepared according to Barrett’s Taxonomy of the text called Cracked Bucket used in the present study:

**Table 2:** Examples of Simple Reading Comprehension and Deep Reading Comprehension Questions From the Text, “Cracked Bucket”.

Categories	Explanation	Example questions
Simple reading comprehension	Sequence of events (Recalling)	Students are asked to remember the sequence of events or actions clearly presented in the text. <i>According to the text, what does the Waterman do with the flowers he has collected?</i>
	Cause – effect relationships (Recalling)	Students are asked to recall the reasons for certain events and actions that have taken place in the text. <i>Why does the Waterman put the Cracked Bucket on his stick in a way that always faces the side of the road?</i>
	Behaviour of the characters (Realizing)	Students are asked to identify and describe the behaviours related to the characters clearly presented in the text. <i>From what words do we understand that the Watertight Bucket is always proud of itself?</i>
	Details (Recalling)	Students may be asked to remember the names of the heroes in the story, the name of the place where the event takes place, as well as the time. <i>In which country does the story take place in the text you are reading?</i>
Deep reading comprehension	Inference for the main idea	Students are asked to find the main idea implied in the text, the general importance of the text or the basic moral value that is aimed to convey. <i>What is the lesson that can be drawn from this text and what is the main idea of the text?</i>

Inference for personality traits	Students are asked to form hypotheses in line with the clear clues presented about the characters in the text.	<i>Based on the words of the Watertight Bucket, what personality traits can we say it has?</i>
Inference for the figurative language used by the author	Students are asked to reveal the basic meanings of the figurative language used by the author.	<i>What does the Waterman really want to tell us with the phrase 'The water you spilled led to the birth of a new life?'</i>
Inference to predict outcomes	Students are asked to read the beginning the text and make predictions about what might happen next.	<i>When asked by the Cracked Bucket, the owner answers the following question 'Why don't you throw me out even though I'm useless?', so what could the Cracked Bucket have been thinking in the days that follow?</i>

In order to check the intelligibility of the texts and the reading comprehension questions, 25 students from each grade level were administered the test so that their reactions and responses could be examined. The texts and questions were given their final form by editing the incomprehensible points or questions.

### 2.3.2. Assessment of Reader's Self-Perception

The Reader's Self-Perception scale was used to determine the students' reader self-perceptions. The scale was developed by Chapman and Tunmer (1995). The scale was adapted to Turkish by Yıldız and Bulut (2016). It can be applied from the 1<sup>st</sup> grade through the 4<sup>th</sup> grade in primary school and consists of 30 items, in a 5-point Likert structure (No, never=1, Not, usually=2, Undecided=3, Yes, usually =4, Yes, always=5). It has a 3-factor structure, each of which consists of 10 items. These factors are "competence", "difficulty", and "attitude".

In the process of adapting the scale to Turkish, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was examined for the reliability values of the scale items, which were  $\alpha=.73$  for competence,  $\alpha=.63$  for difficulty,  $\alpha=.74$  for attitude, and  $\alpha=.86$  for the whole scale. However, the Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient recalculated by the researchers was found to be  $\alpha=.86$  for the whole scale,  $\alpha=.74$  for competence,  $\alpha=.82$  for attitude, and  $\alpha=.70$  for difficulty. These values show that the scale has a valid structure with a level to make reliable measurements.

## 2.4. Data Collection

Data was collected from three different public schools located in Konya province, with in the middle socioeconomic level, in the spring semester of the 2021/22 academic year in a period of 3 weeks. Necessary permissions were obtained from the Provincial Directorate of National Education. The school administration, primary school teachers and participating students in the classrooms were provided with necessary information about the content of the study. Participation in this study was on a voluntary basis. Data were collected by a single researcher to ensure consistency. During the data collection process, the same procedural order was followed for each class. The data collection process took two-course hours in each grade level. The students were first administered the Reader Self-Perception Scale (40 minutes). Before the students were asked the questions on the scale, they were asked such exercise questions as, "Do you like drawing?", "Do you write neatly?", and "Do you like playing football?", with the aim of making sure that the answering process of the scale (i.e., what the Likert concepts mean) had been fully understood. Then, the researcher read the items on the scale aloud and asked each student to mark an

answer. Prior to the procedure, a preparatory talk was made with the students to explain that the procedure was not like an exam and the results would be kept confidential, and thus they were encouraged to give answers representing their real opinions. Then, the Reading Comprehension Test (40 minutes) was administered in a different course hour.

### 2.5. Data Analysis

In the analysis of the data, the answers given by the students when asked in relation to the Reader Self-Perception Scale and the reading comprehension test were converted into numerical data to be evaluated in the computer environment. Data were collected from 400 students in total. Outlier analysis was performed, and 18 pieces of data that disrupted the normality were excluded from the analysis, which was then carried out on 382 pieces of data. Each item in the Reader Self-Perception scale was expressed as *No, never=1, Not usually=2, Undecided=3, Yes, usually=4, Yes, always=5*. There are 4 simple reading comprehension and 4 deep comprehension questions in the reading comprehension tests. The simple comprehension questions were rated as follows: 2 points for questions with full answers, 1 point for questions with half answers, and 0 point for questions with no answers or with wrong answers. Deep comprehension questions, on the other hand, were rated as 3 points for questions with a full answer, 2 points for questions that were close to the full answer and slightly incomplete, 1 point for questions with half and incomplete answers, and 0 point for questions with incorrect and unanswered answers. The highest score that can be obtained from the reading comprehension test was 20.

The data obtained from the students were analysed by using the SPSS 15.0 statistical package program. In order to evaluate whether the variables fit the normal distribution, the kurtosis and skewness values of each variable were calculated. The normal distribution was found to be acceptable since the kurtosis and skewness values were between +1 and -1 (Tabacnick & Fidel, 2015). Table 3 provides the normality test results.

**Table 3:** Central Tendency Measures and Normality Values by Students' Reader Self-Perception and Reading Comprehension Variables

Values	N	Lowest	Highest	$\bar{X}$	SS	Skewness	Kurtosis
Reader Self-Perception	382	1	5	3.87	.51	-.554	.209
Reading Comprehension Skill	382	0	20	11.56	4.11	-.446	-.059

As can be seen in Table 3, the skewness and kurtosis values of the participants' scale and comprehension scores show a normal distribution and are suitable for parametric tests. Unpaired samples t-test was used to reveal whether there was a difference in students' reader self-perception levels by gender, and One-Way Analysis of Variance (One-Way ANOVA) was used for unpaired samples in order to reveal the difference in students' reader self-perception levels in relation to their grade levels. Pearson Moment Product Correlation (Simple Linear Correlation) was calculated to look into the relationship between students' reading comprehension skills and their reader self-perception levels. In the analyses, .05 and .01 significance levels were taken as criteria. According to Büyüköztürk (2012), the



interpretation of the data obtained as a result of the calculation of the correlation coefficient was as follows: The coefficient value is low at 0.00-0.30, medium at 0.31-0.70, high at 0.71-0.89, and very high at 0.90-1.00.

## 2.6. Ethics Committee Permission

This study was conducted with the approval of the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at Selçuk University, dated 03.06.2022 and numbered E.297284.

## 3. FINDINGS

The first problem of the study aimed to reveal whether the students' reader self-perceptions differed by the gender variable. Table 4 presents the t-test results for unpaired samples.

**Table 4:** T-Test Results of Primary School Students' Reader Self-Perception Levels by Gender

Grade	Difficulty		Competence		Attitude		Reader Self-perception scale total		
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	
Grade 2	N	53	47	53	47	53	47	53	47
	$\bar{X}$	3.63	3.39	3.94	3.71	4.41	4.10	3.99	3.73
	SS	.614	.710	.535	.651	.427	.710	.405	.576
	T	1.83		1.90		2.73		2.64	
	P	.07		.06		.01*		.01*	
Grade 3	N	68	74	68	74	68	74	68	74
	$\bar{X}$	3.67	3.47	3.92	3.68	4.16	3.92	3.92	3.69
	SS	.640	.620	.567	.610	.765	.760	.537	.532
	T	1.83		2.43		1.91		2.52	
	P	.06		.01*		.05*		.01*	
Grade 4	N	73	67	73	67	73	67	73	67
	$\bar{X}$	3.93	3.62	4.09	3.87	4.29	3.84	4.10	3.78
	SS	.568	.647	.608	.492	.584	.704	.475	.443
	T	2.96		2.31		4.09		4.16	
	P	.00*		.02*		.00*		.00*	

\* $p < .05$

As a result of the t-test, it was revealed that the difference between the average scores shows a statistical significance in favour of female students at all grade levels. As can be seen in Table 4 in relation to grade levels, while there is no difference between female and male students in the difficulty and competence factors, which are sub-factors of reader self-perception of 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students ( $p > .05$ ), there is a significant difference between male and female students in the attitude factor and the whole scale ( $t_{100}=2.64$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The average reader self-perception score of 2<sup>nd</sup> grade female students is 3.99, whereas it is 3.73 for male students. There is no difference between male and female students in the difficulty factor of the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students ( $p > .05$ ), while there is a significant correlation between the female and male students in favour of female students in the competency and attitude factors as well as in the whole scale ( $t_{142}=2.52$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The average score of female students in relation to reader self-perception is 3.92, whereas that of male students is 3.69. When it comes to the 4<sup>th</sup> grade students, a statistical significant is apparent between male and female students in all factors of reader self-perception and in the whole scale ( $t_{140}=4.16$ ,  $p < .05$ ). While the mean score of 4<sup>th</sup> grade female students is 4.10 in reader self-perception, it is 3.78 for male students. A general evaluation of all grade levels ( $t_{382}=4.16$ ,

$p < .05$ ) points to a significant difference between male and female students. Thus, it can be suggested that gender was an important variable that affected students' reader self-perception levels, and that female students' reader self-perception level was higher than that of male students.

The second problem of the study examined whether the students' reader self-perception levels differed by their grade levels. Table 5 presents the mean scores of the students' from the Reader Self-Perception Scale according to the grade level.

**Table 5:** Students' Mean Scores on the Reader Self-Perception Scale

Factors	Grade	N	$\bar{X}$	SS
Difficulty	Grade 2	100	3.52	.669
	Grade 3	142	3.57	.637
	Grade 4	140	3.78	.623
Competence	Grade 2	100	3.83	.600
	Grade 3	142	3.79	.593
	Grade 4	140	3.99	.569
Attitude	Grade 2	100	4.27	.596
	Grade 3	142	4.02	.776
	Grade 4	140	4.09	.671
Reader Self-perception scale total scores	Grade 2	100	3.87	.508
	Grade 3	142	3.79	.541
	Grade 4	140	3.95	.488

As can be seen in Table 5, the mean scores of the primary school students from the reader self-perception scale and its factors show that the 4<sup>th</sup> grade students have the highest mean score in the difficulty ( $\bar{X}$ =3.78) and competence ( $\bar{X}$ =3.99) factors, though the highest mean score in the attitude ( $\bar{X}$ =4.27) factor is in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grades. Considering the total mean scores of the students in the scale, it is clear that the 3<sup>rd</sup> graders have the lowest mean score of 3.79, while the 4<sup>th</sup> graders have the highest mean score of 3.95. Table 6 provides the results of one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), conducted to determine the factors and between which grades the students' reader self-perception levels differed.

**Table 6:** One-Way Anova Results of Primary School Students' Reader Self-Perception Levels by Grade Level

Scale	Source Variance	of Sum Squares	of SS	Mean Square	F	p	Statistical Significance
Difficulty	Inter-groups	4.996	2	2.498	6.081	.00*	Grades 2-4 Grades 3-4
	Intra-group	155.688	379	.411			
	Total	101.921	381				
Competence	Inter-groups	3.029	2	1.514	4.400	.01*	Grades 3-4
	Intra-group	130.456	379	.344			
	Total	133.485	381				

Attitude	Inter-groups	3.724	2	1.862	3.857	.02*	Grades 2-3
	Intra-group	182.938	379	.483			
	Total	186.662	381				
Reader self-perception scale	Inter-groups	1.847	2	.924	3.498	.03*	Grades 3-4
	Intra-group	100.074	379	.264			
	Total	101.921	381				

\*p<.05

As is seen in Table 6, there is a statistically significant difference between grade levels as a result of the one-way ANOVA conducted to determine the reader self-perception levels of primary school students by grade level. Tukey's multiple comparison test was used to find out between which grade such a difference was present, as a result of which a statistical significance was found between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades in the *difficulty* factor ( $F_{382}=6.08$ ;  $p<.05$ ). While there was a significant difference between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades in the *competence* factor ( $F_{382}=4.40$ ;  $p<.05$ ), there was a significant difference between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grades in the *attitude* factor ( $F_{382}=3.85$ ;  $p<.05$ ). The difference between the mean score of the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students ( $\bar{x}=3.79$ ) and that of the 4<sup>th</sup> grade students ( $\bar{x}=3.95$ ) in the total score of reader self-perception was statistically significant ( $F_{382}=3.49$ ;  $p<.05$ ).

The third problem of the study examined the relationship between primary school students' reader self-perception levels and their reading comprehension skills by calculating a simple linear correlation. Table 7 presents the Pearson Product Moment Correlation values.

**Table 7: The Relationship Between Reading Comprehension and Reader Self-Perceptions by Grade Level**

Grade	Reading comprehension	Difficulty	Competence	Attitude	Reader self-perception
Grade 2	12.0	.265**	.139	-.016	.164
Grade 3	10.6	.257**	.181*	-.028	.153
Grade 4	12.2	.271**	.113	.070	.193*
Total	11.5	.269**	.158**	.027	.185**

\*\*p<.001 \*p<.05

Table 7 illustrates the relationship between primary school students' reading comprehension skills and reader self-perception levels. Even though the mean scores in reading comprehension do not show a linear increase depending on the grade level, it is 12 in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, 10.6 in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and 12.2 in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. When the students' mean scores in reading comprehension are examined in terms of gender, it appears that the score is 12.0 for female students ( $n=194$ ) and 11.1 for male students ( $n=188$ ). In general, it can be suggested that the reading comprehension level of female students is higher than that of male students. According to the results of the correlational analysis for the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students, the relationship between reading comprehension and reader self-perception indicates a weak, positive and significant correlation with *difficulty* ( $r=.26$ ), a totally insignificant correlation with *competence* ( $r=.13$ ) and *reader self-perception* as a whole ( $r=.16$ ), and a weak, negative and significant correlation with *attitude* ( $r=-.01$ ). On the other hand, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students' reading comprehension skills had a weak,

positive and significant correlation with *difficulty* ( $r=.25$ ) and *competence* ( $r=.18$ ) factors, as well as a weak, negative and significant correlation with the *attitude* ( $r=-.02$ ) factor; however, there appeared a completely insignificant relationship with the reader self-perception levels. Reading comprehension skills of 4<sup>th</sup> grade students and the reader self-perception levels ( $r=.19$ ) combined had a low, positive and significant correlation with the *difficulty* factor ( $r=.27$ ), however, there was a statistically insignificant relationship with *competency* ( $r=.11$ ) and *attitude* ( $r=.07$ ) factors. The overall evaluation of all grades together indicates that primary school students' reading comprehension skills have a positive and significant relationship with all dimensions of reader self-perception.

#### 4. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the present study examining the relationship between primary school students' reader self-perception levels and reading comprehension skills, it seems clear that students' total scores in the reader self-perception scale show significant differences in favour of female students when the gender variable is taken into account. In the literature, Baker and Wigfield (1999), Baştuğ and Çelik (2015), İnnalı and Aydın (2014), Meece et al. (2006), Sağırılı and Okur (2017), Yaylı and Duru (2008), Phillips (2002) and Ünal (2012) reported a similar result and concluded that female students' reader self-perception levels were higher than those of male students. Still, there are also studies (Byrne, 1986; Karakoç-Öztürk, 2015) that found that the reader self-perception did not change according to gender.

The fact that the reader's self-perception tends to change by gender could suggest that female students consider themselves as more competent in reading than male students do and that their likelihood about perceiving the texts as being difficult is low. Moreover, studies on reading motivation, as one of the key elements of the reader self-concept (Baki, 2020; Bozkurt & Memiş, 2013; Yıldız, 2013) have often reported that female students develop higher reading motivation than male students do. There are also other research results showing that girls have more positive reading attitudes than boys (Kush & Watkins, 1996; McKenna, Kear & Ellworth, 1995). The relevant research results indicating that girls prove better than boys in some other areas (reading motivation, reading attitude, reading comprehension, etc.) (Kızgın & Baştuğ, 2020; Yıldız, 2013) have made it easy to understand why girls' reading self-perception levels are higher than those of boys. In addition, the fact that the female students' reading comprehension levels were higher than those of the male students in the present study could be presumed that the students who understand better are likely to have higher self-perception levels about reading. The examination of the sub-dimensions of the reader's self-perception according to the gender variable revealed that the number of statistically significant variables between male and female students in this study increased at each grade level. In other words, female students in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade scored higher only in terms of attitudes towards reading, yet in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, competence came out as another variable in which they acquired higher scores, and in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade, they also appeared to achieve higher scores in the difficulty variable as well, all indicating that girls' reader self-perception levels were considerably higher than those of the boys in all dimensions. This situation shows that the structures that constitute the students' reader self-perception emerge more clearly over time, and that the education they receive, the reading activities they participate in, and the assessment and evaluation processes they are involved in may have played a critical role in shaping this perception. In this process, female students appeared to have reached a more positive self-perception level than male students did.

When students' reader self-perception levels were analysed according to their grade levels, it

clearly appeared that a higher reader self-perception was observed at the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade students, whereas there was an obvious decline in the reader self-perception at the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade level. According to the result, 4<sup>th</sup> grade students showed the highest level of reader self-perception. The variability of students' reader self-perception levels according to their grade levels looks similar to the results reported by Yıldız and Bulut (2016). As the grade levels increase, it is evident that the reader self-perception levels did not follow a regular course in terms of increasing or decreasing. Some studies, however, contrary to this situation, concluded that the reader self-perception decreased as the grade level increased. The study, for example, conducted by Baştuğ and Çelik (2015) with secondary school students, reported that the students' reader self-perception levels turned out to be higher in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades, yet such perception levels decreased as the grade level increased (i.e., in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades). Similar results were obtained as a result of the study conducted by Smith et al. (2012). In the current study, it seemed that the level of reader self-perception did not decrease as the grade level increased, but it rather rose without showing any regular course though. Such a difference in research results may have resulted from the knowledge level-related differences in the sample groups. As a matter of fact, it could be suggested that primary school students require a certain reading accumulation/experience in order to be able to construct a sound reader self-perception. In this connection, it can be considered that as the students' grade level increases, it is possible to achieve such accumulation and their perceptions about their own reading skills may also increase, accordingly.

The results of the *attitude*, *competence* and *difficulty* sub-dimensions of the reader self-perception scale were examined according to the grade levels. The analysis of the *competency* and *difficulty* sub-dimensions revealed that the 4<sup>th</sup> grade students had the highest score. It can be suggested that the reason why these dimensions of reader self-perception were higher in 4<sup>th</sup> grade students could derive from the fact that students' awareness levels about their reading performances and their reading background were higher than they were in other grade levels. According to Yıldız and Bulut (2016), however, 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students had higher reader self-perception levels in terms of competence and difficulty, a result that differs from the result of the present study. However, when it comes to the results of the *attitude* sub-dimension, the higher scores of the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students in both studies make the results of the studies similar in this respect. Moreover, the fact that the students had a better attitude towards reading in the lower grades can be explained by the fact that they were highly likely to have a greater sense of interest and curiosity than the upper grades (Yıldız, 2013). As a result, while there was a significant difference in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students' attitude toward reading, there was no significant difference in the dimensions of difficulty and competence, indicating that students did not have enough knowledge/awareness about their own competence in reading, nor did they have enough background about reading so as to evaluate themselves, and nor did their teachers, parents or peers give enough feedback about their reading performance.

What it is understood from the results of the analysis of the relationship between students' reader self-perception levels and their reading comprehension skills is that there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between reading comprehension and reader self-perception levels, when all grades are considered. In this context, the change in the reader self-perception causes another change in the same direction on reading comprehension skills. In other words, individuals with a high reader self-perception tend to have a high reading comprehension success. The relevant literature review (Bailey, 2009; Courtenay-Brown, 1992; Esmer, 2019; Katzir et al., 2009; Koca, 2020; Kwon & Linderholm, 2014; Phillips, 2002) points to the presence of the studies showing that there is a positive relationship between students' reading comprehension skills and their reader self-perception levels. Furthermore, Courtenay-Brown (1992) revealed the relationships between the concepts of self-perception, attitude

towards reading, and reading comprehension, concluding that children's understanding from the concept of reader-self and total academic achievement were related to general reading comprehension. As another example, Katzir et al. (2009) found a positive relationship between students' reading self-perceptions and their reading comprehension skills in their study conducted with 4<sup>th</sup> grade students. Similarly, in the studies conducted by Phillips (2002) again with 4<sup>th</sup> grade students and Bailey (2009) with high school students, the authors reported a positive relationship between students' reading achievement/reading comprehension skills and reader self-perception. As a result of the research conducted by Esmer (2019), a positive and significant relationship was observed between the reading comprehension levels of 4<sup>th</sup> grade students and their reader self-perceptions. The results of previous studies were in conformity with those of the current study in relation to the relationship between reading comprehension and reader self-perception.

The analyses of the students' reading comprehension skills and the sub-dimensions of the reader self-perception scale pointed to a weak, positive and statistically significant correlation between the reading comprehension skills and the difficulty sub-dimension in the 2<sup>nd</sup> graders. This situation is evidently similar in previous studies (Kwon & Linderholm, 2014). However, no statistically significant relationship was found between reading comprehension skills and competence. In this sense, it seems that whether or not students comprehend what they read is not influenced by whether or not they consider themselves as a competent reader. However, it has often been suggested that individuals who can regard themselves as competent in terms of the reader self-perception will have higher reading comprehension skills (Henk & Melnick, 1995; Sağırılı & Okur, 2017). The fact that there is a weak, negative and significant correlation between reading comprehension skills and attitudes towards reading in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students shows that students with a positive attitude towards reading have a low level of reading comprehension or those with a negative attitude towards it have a high level of reading comprehension. This is a likely indication of possible problems such as lack of vocabulary, lack of strategies for understanding what students read, construing in and out of the text and between the texts, etc., even though they are willing to read. Akyol (2019) stated that besides the *attitude* variable, factors such as vocabulary, determining a strategy for reading, and operating the construing processes prove to be influential on reading comprehension.

The results of the analysis on the reading comprehension skill in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students and the *difficulty* and *competence* sub-dimensions of the reader self-perception scale demonstrated the presence of a weak, positive and significant correlation. Even if the level of such a relationship is low, it can be suggested that individuals who consider themselves competent in terms of reading do not perceive the text as difficult and understand better what they read; however, the opposite is also possible. That is, individuals who do not consider themselves competent in reading are likely to perceive a text as difficult and have difficulty in understanding what they read (Turkish Education Association [TEDMEM], 2020). In this study, there is a weak, negative and significant correlation between the reading comprehension skill and the attitude sub-dimension of the reader self-perception in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students. Even if the weak correlation between attitude and reading comprehension skill shows that the change between variables will not have a strong effect even when impacted by each other, it shows that reading comprehension skill is affected by positive/negative attitudes towards reading in the opposite direction (when one variable increases, the other one decreases). Attitude, which is one of the affective factors impacting on reading comprehension, should be observed positively for the purpose of ensuring consequential and effective reading acquisition (Hamzadayı & Batmaz, 2022). Otherwise, a negative attitude towards reading is highly likely to result in developing a negative self-perception concept in

readers in a way that feeds their inclination or tendency to avoid reading (Sainsbury & Schagen, 2004).

It also seems that there is a weak, positive and significant correlation between reading comprehension skills and the *difficulty* sub-dimension of reader self-perception at the 4<sup>th</sup> grade level, whereas there is no significant relationship with the *competence* and *attitude* sub-dimensions of reader self-perception levels among 4<sup>th</sup> graders. The lack of a significant relationship between students' reading comprehension skills and their results in relation to competency and attitude dimensions is an unexpected result in the present study. As a matter of fact, there are widespread opinions that individuals considering themselves as competent in reading are expected to have high reader self-efficacy, which in return, results in higher reading comprehension performance (Ghonsooly & Elahi, 2010; Hamzadayı & Batmaz, 2022). A number of studies (Sainsbury & Schagen, 2004; Conlon, Zimmer-Gembeck, Creed & Tucker 2006) on this subject matter also support this view. The reason for the difference in the results of this study may be related to the student profiles involved, the data collection tools used, and the students' past experiences.

In summary, the relationship between students' reading comprehension skill and their reader self-perception levels was examined in the sample of primary school students, by taking grade level and gender variables into consideration. The literature review has shown that the cognitive aspect of reading skill, which is one of the most important skills that should be acquired by students in primary school period, has been a more common subject matter to study, yet the affective aspect has been neglected (i.e., specifically, the reader's self-perception) and has not been examined adequately. With this study, both cognitive (understanding) and affective aspects (self-perception) of reading skill were taken into account, and all grade levels at primary school, except for the 1<sup>st</sup> graders, were involved in an attempt to present a holistic picture. Indeed, the most striking result of this study is that students' reading/reader self-perceptions tended to change independent of grade level. Making inferences about a reading material about their own proficiency level and perceiving the given task/material as difficult or easy turned out to impact on their attitudes towards reading and on their comprehension skills. Given the research results in terms of gender, the fact that female students had better reading comprehension levels may have led to them possessing higher reader self-perception levels. More research is, therefore, needed on this dimension (reader self-perception) that affects students' reading comprehension skills. It is believed that the results of this study will shed light on future studies. Some recommendations are presented below based on the available results of study.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

In the present study, the relationship between students' reading comprehension skills and their reader self-perception levels was discussed on the basis of research data collected from a single city. The relevant literature review also indicates that studies examining the relationship between reader self-perception and reading comprehension skills still remain insufficient. For that reason, qualitative data collection tools can be included in order to obtain more reliable and valid results and to conduct in-depth analysis in future studies. Considering the relationship between reading and writing skills, the relationships between less-explored variables (such as the relationship between writing skill, writer self-perception, or the fluency aspect of language skills) can be used with more sample groups and by collecting data from a variety of environments.

Experimental studies are needed so as to find out if there are any cause-effect relationships between skills, since correlation studies do not include any information on cause and effect relationship. If cause-effect relationships can be explored, it may be possible to design activities that will improve

more than one skill. Furthermore, this study, which was carried out with 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> graders at primary school, can be re-conducted with other students at different grade levels by including different variables.

## **6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

There are some limitations to the results found in this study: The collection of data from a single province (Konya) and from several public schools may be considered as the first limitation due to the study results appearing to represent the universe poorly. In addition to that, the data of the variables included in the study were collected in a cross-sectional manner at once. Qualitative research models may, therefore, be employed in order to examine the relationship between variables in detail. In this study, students' reading comprehension levels were limited to their answers to eight open-ended questions prepared for narrative texts. Other types of text, such as informative or persuasive ones, may also be included in reading comprehension tests, so that the types of questions can be diversified and students' reading comprehension levels can be examined widely.

## **Contribution Rate Statement of Researchers**

Contribution rate statement of researchers:

1. First author %50
2. Second author %50

## **Conflict of Interest Declaration**

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.



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