



The Role of Family in Primary School Students' Acquisition of Reading Habits*

Evrin KACMAZ**, Mehmet Arif BOZAN***

Article Information	ABSTRACT
<i>Received:</i> 26.05.2025	The present study aims to investigate the role of the family in shaping children's reading habits. In this context, the research method was determined to be correlational research. The participants of the study consisted of 252 4th grade students and 252 parents. The data collection tools of the study are "Reading habit scale" and "Scale of family competence in creating reading culture". According to the normality test results, the data were analyzed with parametric tests, and the SPSS 25.0 tool was used in the analysis process. In line with the analysis, it was seen that there was a significant positive relationship between children's reading habits and family competence in creating a reading culture. In addition, it was concluded that the family's modeling and participation in reading are more effective in children's acquisition of reading habits than only having positive attitudes and beliefs toward reading.
<i>Accepted:</i> 12.09.2025	
<i>Online First:</i> 29.10.2025	
<i>Published:</i> 31.05.2025	
doi: 10.16986/hunefd.1706286	Keywords: Primary school, reading habit, family literacy
Article Type: Research Article	

Citation Information: Kaçmaz, E., & Bozan, M. A. (2025). The role of family in primary school students' acquisition of reading habits. *Hacettepe University Journal of Education*, 40(4), 252-261. <https://doi.org/10.16986/hunefd.1706286>

1. INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the most basic skills that a person should acquire. For this purpose, reading is one of the first skills that educational institutions aim to develop academically. Reading skill is defined as the process of communicating effectively with the text, in other words, with the author of the text, and creating meaning by using one's prior knowledge in line with a certain purpose and method (Akyol, 2011). Based on this definition, reading is a very effective method in terms of learning and a basic skill to be successful academically in fields such as mathematics, science, and social studies (Akyol, 2008; Aksaçoğlu & Yılmaz, 2007). Therefore, children must acquire this skill at an early age and maintain it at later ages. For this, children should be given the habit of reading.

Reading habit can be defined as the perception of reading as a necessity by the individual and the regular, conscious, and continuous practice of reading (Bayram, 1990; Şahin, 2012). Building on this definition, İnan (2005) emphasizes that individuals should transform reading into a regular activity to achieve their academic, personal, and social goals after acquiring basic literacy skills. In light of these points, it can be said that the defining elements of reading habits are the concepts of continuity and regularity. Indeed, Yılmaz and Ertem (2020) state that reading can become a habit when it is done regularly and continuously. In line with this perspective, Dökmen (1994) outlined several criteria for defining reading habits, including (i) the types of publications read, (ii) the frequency of reading, (iii) the duration of uninterrupted reading sessions, (iv) the temporal intervals between reading (e.g., annually, monthly, or daily), (v) how and where reading materials are acquired and read, (vi) the use of specific reading strategies, and (vii) whether reading is accompanied by other activities, such as listening to music. These criteria lead to the conclusion that a key variable in identifying reading habits is the reader's chosen genre, method of book acquisition, location, timing, and frequency of reading, as well as whether or not the reader consciously employs techniques when reading. However, it is helpful to clarify why it is crucial to develop reading habits.

According to Aksaçoğlu and Yılmaz (2007), reading habits contribute to various aspects of personal development by supporting continuous mental growth, enhancing proficiency in the mother tongue, expanding vocabulary, improving academic

* This research was ethically approved by the Istanbul Aydın University Ethics Committee with its decision dated 21.03.2024 and numbered 2024/2. This research was derived from the master's thesis conducted by the first author under the supervision of the second author.

** Primary school teacher, Atatürk Primary School, İstanbul-TÜRKİYE. e-mail: ekacmaz3447@gmail.com (ORCID: 0009-0009-7401-4070)

*** Assist. Prof. Dr., İstanbul Aydın University, Faculty of Education, Department of Turkish and Social Sciences Education, Turkish Language Teaching Pr., İstanbul-TÜRKİYE. e-mail: mehmetbozan@aydin.edu.tr (ORCID: 0000-0003-3554-4828)

performance, and fostering more effective communication skills. Research has indicated that children's academic achievement is positively impacted by reading habits (Aksoy, 2018; Yıldız & Akyol, 2011). Even though reading helps children develop many abilities and is beneficial to them in many ways, it is important to consider how much of a habit we as a society have made of reading. Studies conducted in Türkiye on reading habits have found that most individuals read only textbooks, while those who read other types of books typically read between one and five books per year, or less than one book per month (Library and Publication Directorate, 2017; Reading Culture Promotion Platform [OKUYAY], 2019). A notable reason participants cited for not reading was simply that they did not enjoy it. By comparison, studies from developed countries report higher average annual reading rates for example, 17 books in France and 12 in the United States (World Population Review, 2022). These findings raise important questions about whether the limited reading habits observed in Türkiye stem from a lack of social encouragement and insufficient early development of this behavior. Considering these findings, it becomes essential to prioritize the family as the primary environment in which reading habits can be nurtured. Indeed, existing research underscores the pivotal role of the family in fostering reading habits among children (Nag et al., 2024; Niklas & Schneider, 2017).

The family is the first institution where children receive education and plays an important role in their development process. Language development is an area where the family has a significant influence. Indeed, studies show that providing children with rich language input and creating interactive environments during their early years contributes significantly to their language development (Huttenlocher et al., 1991; Malmeier & Assadi, 2013; Breeze, & Halbach, 2024; Dahl-Leonard, 2025). To deliver the kind of rich language exposure outlined earlier, it is stated that families should provide their children with access to books and sing songs, lullabies, and nursery rhymes (Saracho, 2002). It is suggested that these practices alone are not sufficient and that families should also engage in activities that will help them develop the habit of reading, which will provide their children with language input throughout their lives (Taylor, 1998; Baker, 2013; Kuo, 2016). Reading books with their children, discussing the books they read, or chatting about them are some examples of such activities. Indeed, when looking at the literature, it is clear that for families to instill a habit of reading in their children, their attitudes and beliefs toward reading, their participation in their children's reading process, and their role modeling are key factors (Cipielewski & Stanovich, 1992; Mullis & Martin, 2015; McElvany & Artelt, 2009; Mora-Figueroa et al., 2016; Stangeland et al., 2023). This parental involvement highlights the role of the family in creating internal motivation for children to reading books. Research emphasizes that internal motivation must be supported for reading to become a habit (Yıldız ve Akyol, 2011; Yusof, 2010).

Overall, reading habits are a fundamental skill that develops at an early age, and individuals who have developed this habit tend to be more successful in academic, cognitive, and language areas (Kana, 2014; Aygün, 2021). The benefits of reading habits are not limited to childhood; it is also a fact that they positively affect individuals' cognitive functions and well-being in adulthood (Sun et al., 2024). Therefore, it is undeniable that children should develop reading habits at an early age and that the family's role in this process cannot be overlooked. A significant portion of the literature on reading habits targets educators and teacher candidates (Kılıç et al., 2023; Öztürk & Kardaş, 2023; Yılmaz, 2006) or offers strategies for developing reading habits (Karatay, Külah, & Kara, 2020; Avcı, Yüksel, & Akıncı, 2010). However, there are limited studies that comprehensively examine the connection between children's reading habits and parents' ability to promote a culture of reading (Çakmak & Yılmaz, 2009; Gökçe et al., 2013; Yıldız, 2016; Yusof, 2010). Building on prior research, the present study aims to reveal the relationship between families' competencies in fostering a reading culture and children's reading habits, thereby addressing a significant gap in the literature. Answers to the following queries were requested for this purpose:

1. What is the level of family competence in the formation of reading culture?
 - a. Does family competence in the formation of reading culture differ according to gender?
 - b. Does family competence in the formation of reading culture differ according to the educational level of the mother and father?
2. What is the reading habits level of 4th grade students?
 - a. Do 4th-grade students' reading habits differ according to gender?
3. Is there a relationship between the reading habits of 4th-grade students and their parents' family competence in the formation of reading culture?
4. What is the level of explanation of parents' beliefs and attitudes towards reading, their modeling of reading and their participation in reading activities on their children's reading habits?

2. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to investigate the association between fourth-grade primary school students' reading habits and their parent's ability to foster a reading culture. The current study's methodology, a correlational model, was chosen for this reason. Without using any kind of intervention, correlational studies are a technique for analyzing the correlations between variables (Büyüköztürk, 2007). The reading habits, and parental competence in creating a reading culture of fourth-graders were all assessed in this study in the absence of any outside intervention. The correlation between these variables was also looked at.

2.1. Participants

In a primary school located in Istanbul's Bağcılar District, 252 fourth-grade pupils and their parents participated in the study during the 2023–2024 school year. Bağcılar district is one of the most populous districts of Istanbul and the majority of the population living in the region has a low-middle income level (Dikçınar Sel & Yazgan, 2023). The region has a population of 713,594 and is served by 28 libraries. Convenience sampling, one of the purposive sampling techniques, was chosen for this investigation. Yıldırım & Şimşek (2016) state that the convenience sampling method enables the research to be completed expeditiously and practically. The sample is readily accessible to the researcher, which is the primary justification for using this approach. Table 1 displays basic statistical information about the participants' demographics.

Table 1.
Demographic Information about the Participants

		Frequency	Percentage
Student Gender	Girl	119	47,2
	Boy	133	52,8
Parent Gender	Woman	219	86,9
	Man	33	13,1
Mother Graduation	Primary school	107	42,5
	Secondary School	51	20,2
	High School	73	29,0
	Bachelor's Degree and Above	21	8,3
Father Graduation	Primary school	79	31,3
	Secondary School	62	24,6
	High School	84	33,3
	Bachelor's Degree and Above	27	10,7

According to the data in Table 1, 119 female students (47.2%) and 133 male students (52.8%) participated in the study. Likewise, 219 of the parents who participated in the study were female (86.9%), and, 33 were male (13.1%). When the education levels of the students' mothers were examined, 107 of them were primary school graduates (42.5%), 51 were middle school graduates (20.2%), 73 were high school graduates (20.0%), and 21 were undergraduate and above (8.3%). When the education levels of the fathers were examined, it was found that 79 had graduated from primary school (31.3%), 62 from secondary school (24.6%), 84 from high school (33.3%), and 27 from undergraduate and above (10.7%).

2.2. Data Collection Tools

In this section, the data collection tools used in the research are explained.

2.2.1. Family Competency Scale in Creating Reading Culture [FCSCRC]: It was developed by Çiğdemir and Akyol (2020). The scale consists of four dimensions: belief, modeling, participation, and attitude, and has 19 items in total. The Cronbach's alpha value of the scale was determined as .86. In the current study, Cronbach's alpha value was calculated as .80. The scale is a five-point Likert-type. Participants' statements were coded between 1 and 5. Code 5 is expressed as "Completely Matching" and code 1 is expressed as "Not Matching at all". The scale comprised four sub-dimensions: attitude, belief, participation, and modeling. Examples of items related to the scale are as follows (Çiğdemir, & Akyol, 2020, pp. 9-10):

- *I want my child to love reading (Belief).*
- *My child sees me reading books (Model).*
- *I read audiobooks to my child using dramatizations (Participation).*
- *Reading books with my child is a challenging activity for me (Attitude).*

2.2.2.. Reading Habit Scale [RHS]: The "Reading Habit Scale" developed by Esen Aygün (2019) was used to determine the reading habits of primary school students. It consists of 21 items and four sub-dimensions. The sub-dimensions were determined as "Individual Attitude, Reading Experience, Family Attitude, and Reading Type". Cronbach's alpha value was found to be 0.95. In the current study, Cronbach's alpha value was calculated as .85. The measurement tool is a five-point Likert scale. Examples of items related to the scale are as follows (Esen Aygün, 2019, p. 696)

- *I read short stories and stories.*
- *I often go to the library.*
- *There is always a book by my bedside.*

2.3. Data Collection

After obtaining the necessary permissions for the implementation of the study, the implementation was carried out in January and February during the 2023-2024 academic year. The study was conducted with 252 fourth-grade students and their parents who voluntarily participated in the study.

The researcher explained to the classroom teachers who would be administering the scales who he was, the purpose of the study, the data collection tools, and what needed to be done to administer the scales to the designated classes. The Reading Habit Scale was administered by the teachers during regular class hours.

Family Competency Scale in Creating Reading Culture was sent to the parents of the students through their children. Parents were asked to answer the questionnaire at home and send it back through the students. The parent questionnaire was collected from the students through the classroom teachers.

2.4. Data Analysis

In the study, SPSS statistical program was used for data analysis. The data sets were checked before the analysis, missing data were identified, and inverted items in the scales were corrected. All data sets were examined before analysis. Then, a normality test was performed to determine whether the data were normally distributed. The kurtosis and skewness coefficients of the variables were examined to determine whether the data were normally distributed. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2013), data are considered normal when the skewness and kurtosis coefficients are between -1.5 and +1.5. The kurtosis and skewness coefficients of the variables are presented in Table 2.

Table 2.

Skewness and Kurtosis Coefficients

Scale	Skewness	Kurtosis
FCSCRC	-.440	-.040
RHS	-.498	.199

Upon examining Table 2, it becomes evident that the FCSCRC scale's skewness and kurtosis values (-.440 and -.040) and the RHS scale's skewness and kurtosis values (-.498 - .199) fall within the range of -1.5 to +1.5. Thus, the study employed parametric tests, as the data were found to be normally distributed. Initially, descriptive analyses were conducted. To examine family effectiveness in fostering a reading culture, a t-test was used for the gender variable, while an ANOVA was applied to assess differences based on the educational levels of mothers and fathers, followed by a Tukey post hoc test. Another t-test was conducted to analyze students' reading habits to gender. Additionally, Pearson correlation analysis was carried out to explore the relationship between students' reading habits and family competence in establishing a reading culture. Finally, hierarchical regression analysis was used to determine the predictive power of the sub-dimensions of the family competence scale on children's reading habits.

3. FINDINGS

The research findings are presented in this part in accordance with the research questions.

3.1. Descriptive statistics

The descriptive statistics obtained in the study are presented in Table 3.

Table 3.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Standard Deviation
FCSCRC	252	38	94	71.45	11.07
RHS	252	26	102	69.55	15.28

Upon examining Table 3, it is evident that the parents' average FESRC scale total score is 71.45. Conversely, it can be observed that the average score on the RHS, which was used to ascertain the students' reading habits, was 69.55.

3.1. Family Competence in Creating Reading Culture

Family competence in creating a reading culture was examined in terms of the gender variable, and the findings are presented in Table 4.

Table 4.

Investigation of Family Competence in Creating Reading Culture According to Gender Variable

	Parent Gender	N	Mean	ss	F	P
FCSCRC	Woman	219	70.2603	.647	250	.518
	Man	33	69.0303			

There was no discernible difference in the findings of the t-test on family competence in the development of reading culture between parents of fourth-grade pupils based on their gender. This demonstrates that family competence in the development of reading culture is unaffected by gender. Table 5 presents the findings about how a mother's educational attainment affects the development of a reading culture.

Table 5.

Investigation of Family Competence in Creating Reading Culture According to Mother's Education Level

	Education level	N	$\bar{x}$	SS		KT	Sd	KO	F	P
FCSCRC	Primary school	107	67.83	10.45	Between group	3205.98	3	2.330	9.605	.000
	Secondary School	51	71.74	9.96	Within group	27592.53	248	.262		
	High School	73	74.46	11.26	Total	30798.52	251			
	Bachelor's Degree and Above	21	78.80	9.74						
	Total	252	71.45	11.077						

A significant difference was found in participants' FCSCRC scores according to their mothers' educational level ($F = 9.61$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .10$). This result shows that mothers' educational level has a moderate effect on FCSCRC scores (Cohen, 1988). The results of the Tukey HSD test show that FCSCRC scores differ according to the educational level of mothers. The scores of mothers with a bachelor's degree or higher ($M = 78.80$, $SD = 9.74$) elementary school ($M = 67.83$, $SD = 10.45$), middle school ($M = 71.74$, $SD = 9.96$), and high school graduates ($M = 74.46$, $SD = 11.26$) at a significant level ($p < .05$). The results of the analysis on the effect of fathers' education levels on creating a reading culture are presented in Table 6.

Table 6.

Investigation of Family Competence in Creating Reading Culture According to Father's Education Level

		N	$\bar{x}$	ss		KT	Sd	KO	F	P
FCSCRC	Primary school	79	68.34	11.04	Between group	3359.44	3	1119.81	10.12	.000
	Secondary School	62	69.67	11.28	Within group	27439.07	248	110.641		
	High School	84	72.76	9.95	Total	30798.52	251			
	Bachelor's Degree and Higher	27	80.59	8.59						
	Total	252	71.45	11.07						

A significant difference was found in participants' FCSCRC scores based on fathers' educational level ($F = 10.12$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .11$). This result indicates that fathers' educational level has a moderate effect on FCSCRC scores (Cohen, 1988). The results of the Tukey HSD test show that FCSCRC scores differ according to the educational level of fathers. The scores of fathers with a bachelor's degree or higher ($M = 80.59$, $SD = 8.59$) elementary school ($M = 68.34$, $SD = 11.04$), middle school ($M = 69.67$, $SD = 11.28$), and high school graduates ($M = 72.76$, $SD = 9.95$) at a significant level ($p < .05$).

3.2. Reading Habits of Students

The results of the analysis on whether reading habits differ according to the gender of the students are presented in Table 7.

Table 7.

Investigation of Reading Habits According to Gender

Groups		N	$\bar{x}$	ss	t Test		
					t	Sd	p
RHS	Girl	119	72.42	13.86	2.891	249.68	.004
	Boy	133	66.97	16.06			

When Table 7 is examined, as a result of the analysis made to determine whether the reading habits of the students differ significantly according to gender, the difference between the arithmetic averages of the groups was found statistically significant ($t = 2.891$; $p < .05$). It is seen that this difference is in favor of female students ($\bar{x} = 72.42$).

3.3. The Relationship between Students' Reading Habits and Families' Competence in Creating a Reading Culture

The results of the analysis conducted to determine the relationship between the reading habits of the students in the study and their parents' competencies in creating a reading culture are presented in Table 8.

Table 8.

Correlation Results

		FCSCRC	Participation	Attitude	Model	Belief
RHS	Pearson Correlation	.568	.526	.264	.514	.393
	Sig. (2-tailed).	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N.	252	252	252	252	252

There is a statistically significant positive relationship between students' reading habits and their parents' competence in fostering a reading culture ($r = 0.568$, $p < 0.01$). This relationship is further supported by effect sizes observed across various sub-dimensions: participation ($r = 0.526$), modeling ($r = 0.514$), belief ($r = 0.393$), and attitude ($r = 0.264$). These findings indicate that as parents demonstrate greater competence in cultivating a reading culture, students' reading habits tend to improve accordingly. The results of the hierarchical regression analysis examining the relationship between reading habits and the sub-dimensions of the Family Competence Scale for Reading Culture (FCSCRC) are presented in Table 9.

Table 9.

Results on Hierarchical Regression

Model	Predictor	B	SH_B	β	ΔR²
1	Attitude	1.18	.27	.26*	.07**
2	Attitude	.902	.26	.20*	.187**
	Belief	2.075	.34	.36*	
3	Attitude	.219	.25	.05*	.331**
	Belief	.971	.34	.17*	
	Participation	.674	.22	.23*	
	Model	1.313	.35	.28*	

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Families' contributions to children's reading habits were examined across three hierarchical levels (see Table 9). In the first step, families' attitudes toward reading emerged as a significant predictor, accounting for 7% of the variance. The belief sub-dimension, added in the second step, increased the explained variance by 11%, bringing the total to 18%. Finally, the inclusion of participation and modeling variables contributed an additional 14%, resulting in a total explained variance of 33%. According to these findings, it can be said that the family's participation in reading activities and their modeling in terms of reading are effective variables for children to acquire reading habits.

4. RESULTS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of the current study was to investigate how families foster students' reading habits. This part presents the findings that align with the study topics and provides a literature review. One of the primary findings indicates that parents' competence in promoting a culture of reading is moderate. This result may indicate that families are not completely passive or inadequate in creating a reading culture for their children, but that they have shortcomings in terms of creating a sustainable and strong reading culture. Indeed, a review of the literature shows that families are not adequate in creating a reading culture (Çiğdemir ve Akyol, 2020; Yıldız, 2016). Families prefer activities such as watching movies together rather than creating libraries and reading books regularly to instill a habit of reading in their children (Yıldız, 2016). Studies have shown that the lack or absence of reading activities has a negative impact on children's literacy. In addition, it reveals that active family literacy activities play a significant role in helping children develop reading habits and language skills compared to passive family literacy activities (Dong, Wu, Dong, & Tang, 2020).

Another finding of the study is that parents' ability to create a culture of reading increases as their level of education increases. There are studies in the literature that support this finding. For example, Baş (2012) found that parents have a positive influence on their children's attitudes toward reading and that as parents' educational level increases, children's attitudes toward reading also increase. Similarly, there are studies showing that parents' educational level also has a positive effect on motivation to read books (Katrancı, 2015; Ülper, 2011). On the contrary, some studies in the literature claim that parents' educational level has no effect on reading habits (Balci, 2009; Yılmaz & Ertem, 2020). These differing results regarding parents' educational status may be related to indirect factors such as the number of books in the home and the family's role model behavior. The quality of activities is paramount in the development of children's literacy skills. Studies on home literacy have shown that parents with higher levels of education read more books to their children, provide more support in terms of vocabulary, and structure the reading environment more effectively (Silinskas, Torppa, Lerkkanen, & Nurmi, 2020; Esmaeeli, 2023). That said, although parental education status is an important variable in creating a culture of reading, it cannot be said to be sufficient on its own.

Secondly, the reading habits of the students were analyzed. As a result of the analysis, it was determined that the students had moderate reading habits. When the related literature is examined, similar to this study, there are studies indicating that children's reading habits are at a medium level (Duran & Sezgin, 2012; Karaaslan, 2016), as well as studies that found that students' reading habits are high (Calp, 2018; Yurtbakan & Erdoğan, 2020). Another conclusion reached in this context is that female students have higher reading habits than male students. Boys read less than females, read different genres, and read in different ways, according to linked literature analysis (Balci, 2009; Cherland, 1994; Karademir, 2018; Millard, 1997; Sadioğlu & Bilgin, 2008). There are also studies stating that this situation is the opposite, that is, boys have higher reading habits than girls (Deniz, 2015). Therefore, although there are studies showing reading habits in favor of female students, more studies need to be conducted in order to reveal a clear situation.

The analyses conducted revealed that families are an important variable in children's acquisition of reading habits. Families are not the only variable in children's acquisition of reading habits, but it is known that families are the most influential non-school variable (Lonigan & Whitehurst, 1989). Furthermore, the literature emphasizes that families are an important variable in both the development of children's literacy skills and the acquisition of reading habits (Nag et al., 2024; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2014). Parents' positive attitudes toward reading and engaging in reading activities with their children increase children's interest in reading (Matvichuck, 2015). Similarly, Bowen (2006) emphasized that children who read with their families develop better reading habits. A particularly noteworthy finding of the study is that modeling reading habits for children and engaging in reading activities with them is more effective than simply having a positive attitude and belief toward reading. In other words, it can be said that parents' relationship with reading and reading with their children are important variables for children to develop reading habits. Indeed, it has been pointed out that simply creating a library at home is not enough to instill a habit of reading in children, and that it is important for parents to actively participate in the process through practices such as interactive reading (de Bondt, Willenberg & Bus, 2020; Harvey, 2016).

Overall, it is not only the responsibility of teachers but also of parents to ensure that children enjoy reading and develop a lifelong habit of reading. However, considering that even teachers frequently use rewards in the process of instilling a habit of reading in children (Bozan, 2024), it is more likely that parents will choose these methods because they are not educators. However, variables that support external motivation, such as rewards, can have short-term and superficial effects and do not create internal motivation for reading (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999; Wehe, Rhodes, & Seger, 2015). Indeed, it should not be forgotten that intrinsic motivation forms the basis of long-term behavioral habits (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Research shows that increasing children's intrinsic motivation helps them develop positive emotional bonds with books and increases their reading frequency (Becker, McElvany, & Kortenbruck, 2010; Ma & Zhao, 2025). This suggests that it is considered important to inform families about the right strategies for instilling a habit of reading books in children. Indeed, Tompkins (2006) emphasizes that teachers should guide families on which books children should read and how they should engage in reading and writing activities with their children in order to support families in this regard.

Based on the results obtained in the study, a number of recommendations are presented. Classroom teachers should provide guidance on topics such as family-child reading activities and children's literature. Classroom teachers should design activities that guide families, particularly in terms of role modeling and participating in the reading process. The Ministry of National Education can create family support programs that include seminars, digital content, and guidebooks to promote a culture of reading. While the findings of this study provide valuable insights, they are derived from quantitative data and constrained by the study's scope. Future research employing qualitative methods is recommended to explore the role of the family in children's reading habits in greater depth. Another limitation of the current study is its cross-sectional nature. This means that the variables examined are studied within a specific time frame. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies be designed longitudinally in order to examine the developmental aspects of the variables.

Research and Publication Ethics Statement

This study is based on the first author's master's degree thesis. This study was ethically approved by the Istanbul Aydın University Ethics Committee with its decision dated 21.03.2024 and numbered 2024/2

Contribution Rates of Authors to the Article

This research was derived from the master's thesis conducted by the first author under the supervision of the second author.

Statement of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest between them.

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