Development A scale to Measure Attitudes of First Cycle Basic Education Students in Oman Towards Reading

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Abstract

This study aimed to develop a scale to measure the attitudes of basic education students towards reading. A sample of 400 students from Omani public schools from five educational governorates participated in the study. The participants were from the fourth grade, which marks the end of the first cycle of basic education (grades one through four) according to the educational system in Oman. The study went through the steps of content validity by presenting the initial version of the scale to experts. Then, exploratory factor analysis was conducted, showing that the items of the scale could be classified from two dimensions to four dimensions, accounting for 44% of the variance among the items. For the purposes of the study, the scale items were divided into two dimensions: attitudes towards reading for study purposes, and attitudes towards reading for enjoyment and leisure.To ensure the representativeness of the items for the scale, confirmatory factor analysis was used to verify the suitability of the proposed model using the AMOS software. The results confirmed that the proposed model fit well, all indicators of Chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) index, the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), the Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI), the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and the Root Mean Square Residual (RMR) concluded that the model demonstrates a good fit. In additional the result of the reliability shows that the Cronbach's alpha for this instrument is (0.833) and the Cronbach's alpha for scale items ranged from (0.17) to (0.834) which indicate to a confidant for the implementing.

Keywords: *Students in Oman, Reading, and scale to Measure Attitudes.*

INTRODUCTION

Many researchers in Arab countries agree that reading proficiency stands as the cornerstone of the four language skills: listening, speaking, and writing (Medkur, 2002). Moreover, in most Arab countries, Arabic language teaching hours occupy the largest portion of the school schedule (Shaheh, 1998). Fathallah (1998) suggests that reading provides students with various life experiences, impacting their interests, understanding of society, and life in general. Additionally, it equips them with scientific knowledge about the world they live in, offering opportunities for enjoyment and entertainment. Other researchers assert that students' reading levels and attitudes towards reading are significantly linked to various factors surrounding them since their early years (Almutawaa, 1990; Alfouri, 1999; Almaskari, 2004; Aljundi, 2010; Alsaadi & Mansi, 2011). In the same way educational literature in western countries also supports the notion that students' reading proficiency or their inclination towards reading is greatly influenced by factors such as the general culture of the society, family income level, student motivation and attitude, teachers' beliefs about reading instruction, among other factors (Pink, 1996; Sallabas, 2008; Harris, 2009; Spiegel, 1994; Topping, 1985; Mullan, 2010; Kubis & Mary, 1994; Nathanson et al., 2008; Cunningham, 2008; Baccus, 2004; Tidwell, 1991; Tyler, 2006; Vasquez, 2008; Vasquez, 2005).

It is axiomatic that the topic of attitudes is one of the significant areas related to various school subjects; it is intertwined with the environment and students' prior experiences. Attitudes guide students towards making either positive or negative decisions and behaviors. Ibrahim Khalifa and others (2011) have indicated that uncovering students' attitudes in schools is the initial step towards modifying their behavior. It serves as a mediator between students' motivations on one hand and their behaviors in the surrounding environment on the other. Therefore, attitudes towards reading are at the forefront of the trends addressed in various studies and researches at different levels, such as Bani Khalid's (2022) study which aimed to explore the attitudes towards reading and their relationship with the educational level of parents and academic achievement. The study sample consisted of 839 male and female students from the tenth grade in schools in the city of Irbid. To

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achieve the study objectives, the Reading Attitudes Scale was utilized. The results showed that the overall attitudes of tenth-grade students were positive. Furthermore, the results indicated a significant correlation between attitudes towards reading and the educational level of both mothers and fathers. The study also revealed a significant correlation between attitudes towards reading and academic achievement in Arabic language. Namely, when transitioning from students with low academic achievement to high academic achievement, passing through students with average achievement, attitudes shifted from negative to positive. Additionally, the results showed statistically significant gender differences in reading attitudes, favoring females. On the same way, Seitz (2010) case study investigated student attitudes toward reading at summer reading clinic through an urban teaching college in upstate New York. It was hypothesized that student attitudes would improve during their literacy clinic attendance because students received dynamic support from reading specialist candidates. Student attitudes were assessed through classroom observations and informal interviews. Findings indicated that reading specialist candidates' consistent involvement in the learning process was crucial for student success. Furthermore, student attitudes toward reading were found to be multidimensional and challenging to assess, those were some studies that addressed reading attitudes.

In Sultanate of Oman t must be remembered that the basic education system initiated in Oman in 2008, follows a similar trajectory, aiming primarily to equip students with the necessary knowledge and skills for life (Ministry of Education, 1999; Ministry of Education, 2006; Ministry of Education, 2009). Teaching reading and its skills are prioritized, especially in the early years of schooling, as reading proficiency is fundamental for learning other subjects (Fadlallah, 1998; Ministry of Education, 1999; Ministry of Education, 2006; Alhalaq, 2010). In addition, Ministry of Education in Oman exerts significant efforts towards learning outcomes across all educational stages, particularly in the first cycle, given its importance in imparting students with diverse basic skills, foremost among them being positive attitudes towards reading. Success in this domain translates to success in acquiring the curriculum content, including knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values. However, a gap can be observed in the provision of psychological and cognitive measures tailored to the Omani context, which could assist teachers, school administrations, and educational directorates in forming a clear picture of their students' levels in this cycle. Such measures are expected to guide them in adopting realistic and systematic steps and procedures based on the results of these measures. At the forefront of these measures, which the researchers believe the Ministry of Education urgently needs, is a "Reading Attitudes Scale."

Method

Type and Design of Research

The researcher relied on the descriptive-analytical method in his study, which involves examining the phenomenon or problem as it exists in the field by collecting data and information about it, analyzing it statistically, and reaching conclusions that may contribute to understanding the reality and proposing future solutions for its development. Al-Jubouri (2012, p. 179) defines the descriptive-analytical method as: "A precise and organized description and analytical approach to the phenomenon or problem under investigation, through a scientific methodology to obtain scientific results and interpret them in an objective and neutral manner, achieving the research objectives and hypotheses."

Sample of the Study

In order to obtain a sample representing the primary school community of first cycle students in the Sultanate of Oman, this research focused on fourth-grade students, marking the culmination of the first cycle of basic education in Oman, spanning from first to fourth grade. Therefore, a random sample was selected from various educational governorates in Oman: Muscat, Interior, North Al Batinah, South Al Batinah, and Al Dhahirah. The sample consisted of 400 students, evenly split between 200 males and 200 females. Table (2) shows the sample of the study.

The First Draft of the Scale

This scale was designed after referring to a set of studies related to attitudes toward reading, such as Mackenna (1990), Morin and others (2019), Setize (2010), Estes (2012) ,Bani khalid (2014), Alsabatibi, Laoon and Ayesh (2016), (2020),Birakdar and firat (2020) Altal and Bani khalid (2021). The researcher benefited from these

studies in forming the initial draft of the scale's Likert-type response format, due to the consensus among various referenced studies. The researcher divided attitudes into positive, negative, and neutral categories. Specifically, the researcher adopted the McKeen Pictorial Scale (1990), which includes four phrases (extreme joy, mild joy, mild sadness, extreme sadness). Each phrase in the scale starts with the question "How do you feel?", which is a subjective question aligned with the principle of attitude measurement, involving feelings and emotions.

The Validity

The content validity of the Scale of students' attitudes toward reading was checked by four panel experts from University of Nizwa. The purpose of this checking was to see whether the items were clear and whether its content complied with Omani society and culture. The experts approved all the scale items and had no comments regarding the phrasing of the items or their relevance to Omani culture.

Factor Analysis In order to conduct the factor analysis for scale of students' attitudes toward reading reading, the researcher conducted a pilot study among 400 students of Fourth grade; 200 males and 200 females from five Basic Education schools from Muscat, Interior, North Al Batinah, South Al Batinah, and Al Dhahirah regions. A factor analysis was conducted for the scale of students' attitudes toward reading to determine if it was loaded with the expected number of factors or would have to be divided into more or less latent factors. An exploratory component analysis was performed on 20 items for the whole sample's study. The Principal Component Analysis with extraction method (EFA) was used. As shown in Table1. The Varimax rotation (Kaiser Normalization) was significant at 0.05. The KMO was 910, which indicated that all indicators had significantly high factor loadings. According to Kaiser (1974), the KMO value should be greater than 0.5 to be acceptable, values between 0.5 and 0.7 are acceptable, values between 0.7 and 0.8 are good, values between 0.8 and 0.9 very good and values above 0.9 are excellent. It was clear that the KMO of this scale (.910) is above 0.9; therefore, it was excellent. A Factor loading of .4 was used as a lower cut-off value. The total variance explained as shown in Table 2 revealed that this scale contained four factors of attitudes toward reading explaining around 42.36 percent of the variance.

Table 1KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.910
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2952.184
	Df	190
	Sig.	.000
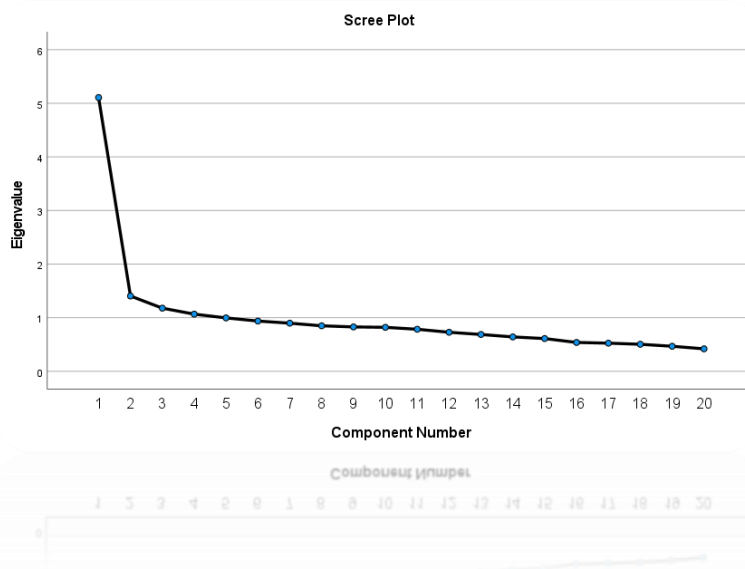
Figure 1 Scree plot of eigenvalues for 20 items .

Table 2The total variance explained

Component	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
		Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings	
1	5.108	25.540	25.540	5.108	25.540	25.540
2	1.405	7.025	32.565	1.405	7.025	32.565
3	1.179	5.893	38.458	1.179	5.893	38.458
4	1.067	5.334	43.792	1.067	5.334	43.792
5	.997	4.983	48.776			
6	.938	4.690	53.466			
7	.898	4.491	57.957			
8	.849	4.246	62.203			
9	.828	4.142	66.345			
10	.821	4.104	70.449			
11	.785	3.924	74.373			
12	.729	3.643	78.017			
13	.687	3.437	81.454			
14	.642	3.210	84.663			
15	.611	3.056	87.719			
16	.539	2.693	90.412			
17	.525	2.627	93.039			
18	.505	2.524	95.563			
19	.467	2.337	97.900			
20	.420	2.100	100.000			

Therefore, for the current study, the items of the scale of reading attitudes toward reading was divided into four factors. Those four factors represent around (44%) of variance of the total scale. Each factor was assigned a label that accurately reflected the variables that were loaded on it. Variables with higher loadings were considered to be more important and had a greater influence on the chosen label. Items without any loading were not valid for any variable in the questionnaire. As is shown in Table 3, there is no item without loading. The final draft of the scale of students' attitudes toward reading contained 20 items.

Table 3The Principal Component Analysis

	Rotated Component Matrix				
		Component			
		1	2	3	4
SRA15	How do you feel when you read a book or story advised by teacher from school biliary?	.602	.189		.333
SRA14	How do you feel when you read for the purpose of studying and doing homework?	.555	.384	.136	.131
SRA18	How do you feel when you read for doing the homework in the weekend?	.552		.153	-.252-
SRA17	How do you feel when you share reading with your family?	.552	.281		
SRA11	How do you feel when you start reading a new story/book?	.537	.243	.128	.324
SRA19	How do you feel when you are asked to read aloud in class?	.503			.370
SRA16	How do you feel when you read during the summer vacation instead of playing with friends?	.475	.455	.162	.140
SRA12	How do you feel when you exchange stories and books with your friends for reading?	.128	.728		
SRA13	How do you feel when you have a variety of books and stories available at home?	.272	.623	.134	.112
SRA20	How do you feel when your teacher asks you to answer questions about a text?	.464	.501		
SRA10	How do you feel when you read a book or story during Eid?	.204	.466	.114	.234
SRA5	How do you feel when you are gifted a book or story from your teacher in school?		.254	.645	
SRA8	How do you feel when you read an enjoyable book or story?		.102	.631	
SRA2	How do you feel when you read as part of the school radio broadcast in front of the students?			.631	.229
SRA7	How do you feel when you read a book or story while in the car, bus, or at the airport?		.468	.521	.159
SRA1	How do you feel when you visit a library or book fair with your family?	.376		.381	-.262-
SRA6	How do you feel when you read a digital book or story from the internet?		.116	.103	.598
SRA9	How do you feel when your teacher asks you to summarize/search/write a report on a text from the internet?		.218		.569
SRA4	How do you feel when you read a book or story during your free time in the school's learning resource center?	.319	-.214-	.318	.484
SRA3	How do you feel when you read a text from the internet related to your study in school.?	.117	.354	.159	.360

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).

To validate the researcher's hypothesis regarding the appropriateness of dividing the attitude towards reading scale into two variables: attitudes towards reading for study, and attitudes towards reading for pleasure and leisure time, the researcher employed confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). This analysis emphasized the latent external variables ranging from one to twenty, data was collected from a sample of 400 students, equally divided between males and females. Additionally, the analysis considered the internal variables or residual errors ranging from e1 to e12. The researcher proposed the following model for the suggested scale, which includes 20 items. The following table presents the calculated values of some fit indices after making certain adjustments, as provided by the AMOS software

Table 4 values of some fit indices after making certain adjustments, as provided by the AMOS software:

Index	Calculated Value	Acceptance Criterion
Chi-square/df (χ^2/df)	2.5	< 5
GFI (Goodness of Fit Index)	0.98	> 0.90
AGFI (Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index)	0.92	> 0.90
RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation)	063	< 0.08
TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index)	0.90	> 0.90
CFI (Comparative Fit Index)	9. 05	> 0.90
RMR (Root Mean Square Residual)	.063	< 0.10
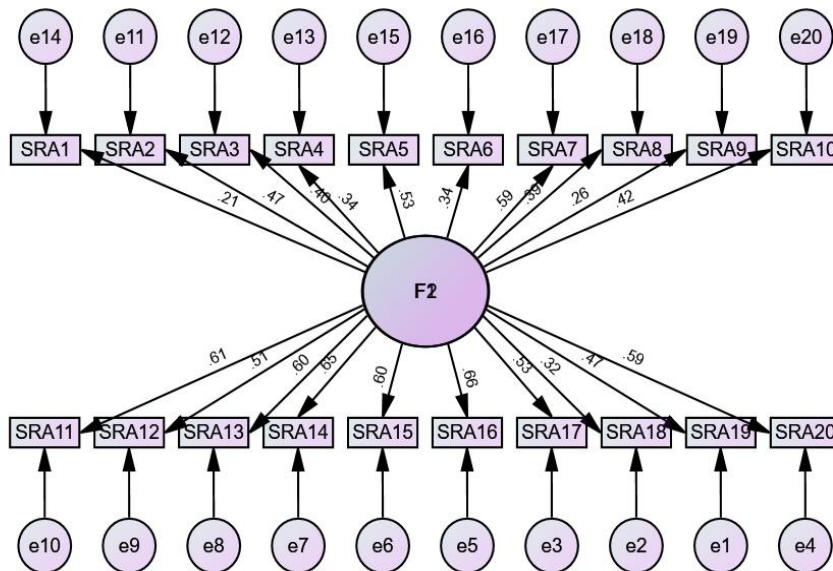
It is evident from Table (4) that the fit indices, according to the specified criterion for each index, indicate a good model fit. The Chi-square of this model = 441.098, the Degrees of freedom = 170, and the Chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio (χ^2/df) is 2.5, which is less than 5, indicating the acceptance of the proposed model. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) index has a value of .063 which is less than 0.08, indicating a good fit. The Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) is 0.908, the Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) is 0 .92, the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) is 0.90, and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) is 9. 05 and all these indices are greater than 0.90 falling within acceptable limits and signifying good model fit. The Root Mean Square

Residual (RMR) is an important fit index has a value of .063, which is greater than 0.01 but still indicates a good fit. Based on this evidence, it can be concluded that the model demonstrates a good fit.

The Two Dimensions of the Scale of Students' Attitudes Toward Reading

Students, Attitudes Toward Reading for Study

As presented in Table 5, the factor loading of the ten items contained in Factor One ranging from.39 to .37. The items associated with this factor were related to Students' attitudes toward reading for study. Furthermore, these items refer to the roles of the student in engaging in reading activities within the school under the guidance of the teacher. This includes activities such as completing assignments, visiting the school library, and utilizing the learning resource center under the teacher's supervision.

Table 5Items of factor One Students, attitudes toward reading for study .

	Statements	Loading
	How do you feel when you are gifted a book or story from your teacher in school?	.645
	How do you feel when you read as part of the school radio broadcast in front of the students?	.631
1	How do you feel when you read a book or story advised by teacher from school biliary?	.602
	How do you feel when your teacher asks you to summarize/search/write a report on a text from the internet?	.569
2	How do you feel when you read for the purpose of studying and doing homework?	.555
3	How do you feel when you read for doing the homework in the weekend?	.552
4	How do you feel when you are asked to read aloud in class?	.503
5	How do you feel when your teacher asks you to answer questions about a text?	.501
9	How do you feel when you read a book or story during your free time in the school's learning resource center?	.484
10	How do you feel when you read a text from the internet related to your study in school.?	.360

On the other hand, as presented in Table 6, the factor loading of the ten items contained in Factor two ranging from.39 to .37. The items associated with this factor were related to Students, attitudes toward reading for funny, and spending time in social activities. This aspect relates to students' reading activities outside of school, whether associated with free reading for enjoyment or involving family and community in reading activities, which is also an aspect of enjoyment.

Students, Attitudes Toward Reading for Funny, And Spending Time in Social Activities

Table 6 Items of factor two: attitudes toward reading for funny, and spending time in social activities

	statements	Loading
1	How do you feel when you exchange stories and books with your friends for reading?	.728
2	How do you feel when you read an enjoyable book or story?	.631
3	How do you feel when you have a variety of books and stories available at home?	.623
4	How do you feel when you read a digital book or story from the internet?	.598
5	How do you feel when you share reading with your family?	.552

6	How do you feel when you start reading a new story/book?	.537
7	How do you feel when you read a book or story while in the car, bus, or at the airport?	.521
8	How do you feel when you read during the summer vacation instead of playing with friends?	.475
9	How do you feel when you read a book or story during Eid?	.466
10	How do you feel when you visit a library or book fair with your family?	.381

The Reliability

In order to test the reliability of the Scale of Students' Attitudes Toward reading the same pilot study among 400 students of 4th –grade; 200 males and 200 females from 8 Basic education school was used.The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients were used to assess the reliability of the two dimensions of the scale, as shown in Table 7, the result shows that the Cronbach's alpha for this instrument in the two dimensions is (0.833) and the Cronbach's alpha for scale items ranged from (0.17) to (0.834) which give us a confidant for the implementing.

Table 7 The Coefficient Reliability for the two dimensions Scale of Students' Attitudes Toward Reading

Items of factor one	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
How do you feel when you are gifted a book or story from your teacher in school?	.834
How do you feel when you read as part of the school radio broadcast in front of the students?	.829
How do you feel when you read a book or story advised by teacher from school biliary?	.825
How do you feel when your teacher asks you to summarize/search/write a report on a text from the internet?	.830
How do you feel when you read for the purpose of studying and doing homework?	.827
How do you feel when you read for doing the homework in the weekend?	.830
How do you feel when you are asked to read aloud in class?	.822
How do you feel when your teacher asks you to answer questions about a text?	.832
How do you feel when you read a book or story during your free time in the school's learning resource center?	.831
How do you feel when you read a text from the internet related to your study in school.?	.824
Items of factor two	**Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted**
How do you feel when you exchange stories and books with your friends for reading?	.819
How do you feel when you read an enjoyable book or story?	.823
How do you feel when you have a variety of books and stories available at home?	.820
How do you feel when you read a digital book or story from the internet?	.817
How do you feel when you share reading with your family?	.822
How do you feel when you start reading a new story/book?	.817
How do you feel when you read a book or story while in the car, bus, or at the airport?	.824
How do you feel when you read during the summer vacation instead of playing with friends?	.834
How do you feel when you read a book or story during Eid?	.826
How do you feel when you visit a library or book fair with your family?	.820
Total reliability of the Scale	**0.833**

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that the tool possesses validity through content validity and factorial validity using factor analysis and path analysis with AMOS. The proposed model was found to fit using confirmatory factor analysis. Additionally, the tool demonstrated an appropriate level of reliability through Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Therefore, it can be said that the tool has sound and valid psychometric properties.

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