

## Early Childhood Education and Reading Ability

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### Abstract

*The 'normal' ability at which a child might be expected to be able to read and comprehend written material is called reading ability. As in most areas of learning, people perform at different levels according to their skill, practice, motivation and so on. Reading is a cornerstone for a child's success in school and indeed, throughout life. Without the ability to read well, opportunities for personal fulfilment and job success inevitably are lost. Early childhood education prepares the children for school skills. If the children do not receive ECE, their chances of coping with the further and formal education diminish. Keeping this hypothesis in mind that ECE has influence on the reading ability of children, the study aims to observe the difference between the reading ability of the children who received ECE as compared to those who did not.*

### Introduction

At least one in five children has significant difficulty learning to read (Lyon G.R., 1996). Reading difficulties are common and are associated with poor long-term academic achievement. Evidence clearly demonstrates that most school-ability children with reading difficulties fail to catch up with their peers (Swanson, H.L. et al., 1998). They are caused by both environmental and organic risk factors. There is good

evidence that individualised instruction emphasising increased phonologic awareness can have a favourable long-term effect on academic achievement. Although most of the children not given early education eventually become literate, many continue to have reading difficulties and never become fluent readers. Early development of reading skills is essential, and efforts should be made to identify children with reading difficulties and implement interventions

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at an early ability (Catts H.W. 2003). A child's third-grade reading ability is reasonably predictive of overall long-term academic achievement (Jinks A, et. al., 2011) Seventy-five per cent of children with reading difficulties who are not identified before the third grade continue to have reading difficulties in the ninth grade, and fewer than two per cent go on to participate in a four-year educational programme after high school (Glascoe F.P., 2007).

School-ability children with reading difficulties should have received individualised instruction to increase phonologic awareness, decoding skills, sight word vocabulary, and reading comprehension. Intervention should begin early, be provided by expert teachers, and use detailed and intensive approaches emphasising phonetics (National Reading Panel, 2006). The present research aims to observe the difference between reading ability of the children who received ECE as compared to those who did not.

### Objectives

The research is focused on the comparison between reading performance among students of classes VI to VIII who received appropriate early childhood education in their early years and those who did not.

1. To assess the reading performance of the students of Classes IV to V who received early childhood education or those who did not.
2. To study the gender differences in reading performance of students in Classes VI to VIII.

3. To observe the other causes of poor reading performance.

### Hypothesis

The hypothesis is as follows:

- H<sub>o</sub> 1.** The reading ability of those students who received early childhood education would be better as compared to those who did not.
- H<sub>o</sub> 2.** The reading ability of boys would be better as compared to the girls.
- H<sub>o</sub> 3.** The reading ability of those girls who received early childhood education would be better as compared to those girls who did not.
- H<sub>o</sub> 4.** The reading ability of those boys who received early childhood education would be better as compared to those boys who did not.

### Design of the Study

The present study aims to diagnose reading difficulty through 'Schonell Reading Test' by Schonell and Goodacer (1971) which assesses the reading ability of children from 6 to 15+ years of ability. Although this performance of children does not confirm that children have learning disability but it is the first step towards diagnosis.

### Sample

The total sample consisted of 30 boys and 30 girls from the private schools of an urban slum, where 15 boys and girls came from the ECE background and

the rest 15 boys and girls came from the non-ECE background. The data was collected through convenient sampling.

**Locale of Study**

Sample was collected from an urban slum of Jaipur city.

**Tools**

Schonell Reading Test by Schonell and Goodacer (1971) used to test the reading ability of children. The tool assesses the reading ability of children from 6 to 15+ years of ability. Schonell’s reading test, which was written in Australia and first published in Britain 1950, has been reprinted several times. The tool is being rigorously used for diagnostic purpose.

**Methodology**

Schonell Reading Test was introduced

with the help of a friend and the class teacher. There are 100 words included in the test which the investigator read out loud to the child in a quiet setting. The child read all by her and no help was provided. The investigator ticked every word that was spelt correctly and then the total number of correctly spelt words were counted and reading ability was measured as per the formula in the manual.

**Statistical Analysis**

The data was tabulated and t-test was applied to study the significant difference.

**Results**

The results were compiled according to the framed hypothesis:

**H<sub>0</sub>1** The reading ability of students of those who received early childhood education would be better as compared to those who did not.

**Table 1: Reading Ability of Students**

	Mean	N	SD	t	P
Students who received ECE	7.7137	30	1.1923	.8149	0.5565
Students who did not receive ECE	7.5559	30	0.8149		

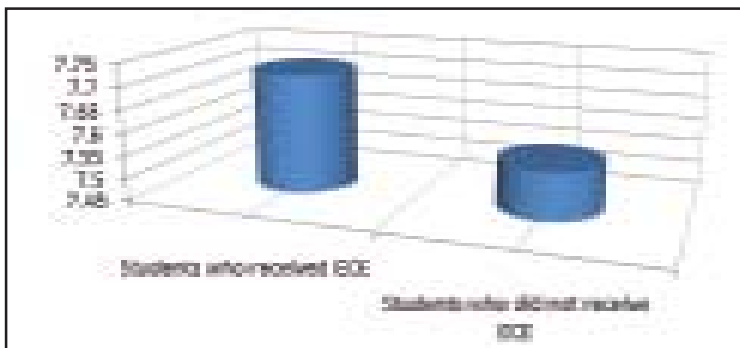


Table 1 shows that this difference is considered to be not statistically significant at 5%. There is no significant difference in the reading ability of children who have ECE background and those who do not.

**H<sub>0</sub> 2.** The reading ability of those boys who received early childhood education would be better as compared to the girls.

**Table 2: Reading Ability of Girls and Boys**

	Mean	N	SD	t	P
Girls	6.6150	15	6.3266	1.4881	0.1625
Boys	6.8721	15	0.4344		

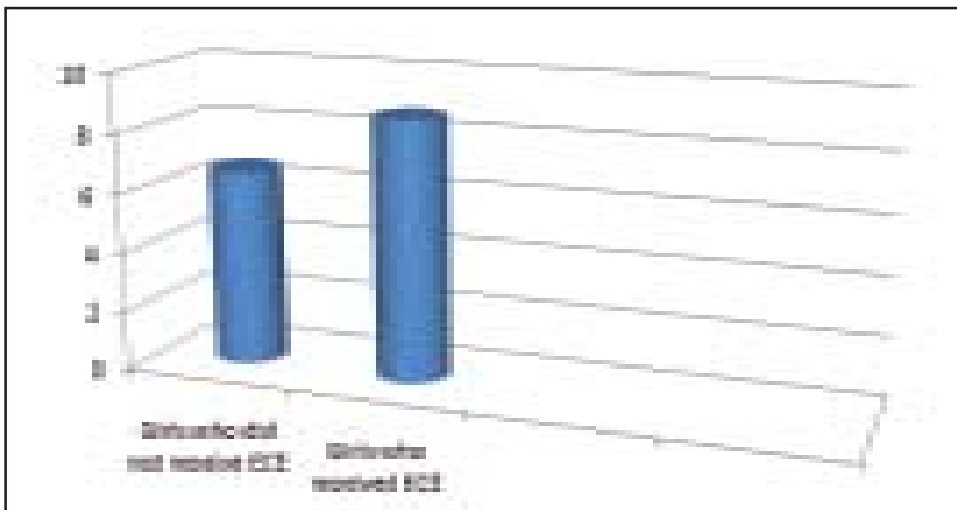
Table 2 shows that this difference is considered to be extremely statistically significant. The girls, if given an equal opportunity, shall be more responsive academically.

**H<sub>0</sub> 3.** The reading ability of girls who receive early childhood education would be better as compared to those girls who did not.

Table 3 shows that this difference is considered to be extremely statistically significant. As observed the girls who received ECE had higher reading ability. Hence, proving the influence of ECE on academic achievement.

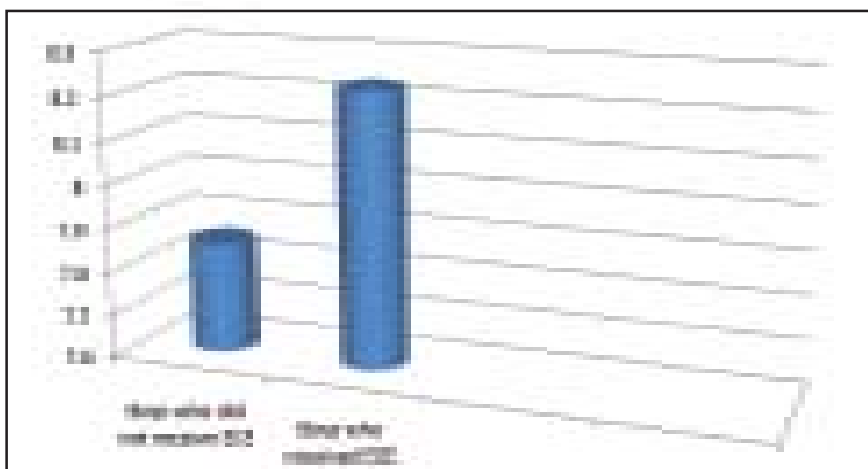
**Table 3: Reading Ability of Girls**

	Mean	N	SD	t	P
Girls who did not receive ECE	6.6150	15	0.3266	12.0189	0.0001
Girls who received ECE	8.7333	15	0.6499		



**Table 4: Reading Ability of Boys**

	Mean	N	SD	t	P
Boys who did not receive ECE	7.8570	15	1.0808	1.6073	0.1135
Boys who received ECE	8.2110	15	0.4965		



**H<sub>0</sub> 4.** The reading performance of the boys who received early childhood education would be higher as compared to those boys who did not.

Table 4 shows that this difference is considered to be statistically significant. The boys who received ECE had much higher reading ability as compared to those who did not. Hence ECE seems to be beneficial in improving reading performance of boys.

The results revealed that the reading performance of students in both groups differ from each other and the reading performance of the students who received ECE in early days was much better.

### Conclusion

The result indicates that children who receive ECE have better reading ability. In case of boys and girls both, if ECE is introduced at young ability, it is sure to benefit their academic achievement. Gender discrepancy was observed and the reading ability of boys was found to be much higher as compared to girls. Girls should be given equal opportunity to read, write and grow.

ECE is a vital component in building the base of formal education. Also there is gender discrepancy in giving personal attention to boys and girls in urban slums. Although the government gives equal educational right to girls and boys, but the societal attitude still needs to be changed.

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