

## AN ANALYSIS OF READING COMPREHENSION EXPERIENCES BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE STUDENTS AT SMAN 20 GOWA

Rina Asrini Bakri\*

*Universitas Negeri Makassar, Makassar, Indonesia*

*e-mail: [rina.asrini@unm.ac.id](mailto:rina.asrini@unm.ac.id)*

**Abstract.** Reading comprehension is an essential skill in English language learning because it helps students understand and interpret written texts effectively. This study aimed to explore the reading comprehension experiences of male and female students at SMAN 20 Gowa using a qualitative descriptive approach. The participants consisted of 37 students, including 18 male students and 19 female students. Data were collected through classroom observations, interviews, questionnaires, and document analysis. The findings revealed that female students demonstrated stronger motivation, more active classroom participation, and more effective reading strategies than male students. Female students also showed greater confidence during discussions and more frequent reading habits outside the classroom. In contrast, male students tended to experience difficulties in understanding long texts and unfamiliar vocabulary, resulting in lower classroom participation and reading engagement. The study also found that vocabulary mastery, learning environment, classroom interaction, and reading motivation significantly influenced students' reading comprehension experiences. These findings suggest that English teachers should apply interactive and gender-responsive teaching strategies to improve students' reading comprehension learning. This study contributes to understanding gender differences in reading comprehension experiences within Indonesian senior high school contexts.

**Keywords:** reading comprehension; gender differences; classroom interaction; reading motivation; qualitative study

### I. INTRODUCTION

English has become one of the most important international languages used in communication, education, science, and technology worldwide. In Indonesia, English is taught formally from secondary school to university level because it plays a significant role in helping students access global knowledge and participate in international communication. Among the four language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing, reading is considered one of the most essential skills because students gain information, understand academic materials, and improve knowledge through reading activities.

Reading comprehension is a complex cognitive process that involves understanding, interpreting, and constructing meaning from written texts. According to Snow (2021), reading comprehension requires readers to integrate vocabulary knowledge, prior experiences, reading strategies, and critical thinking in order to understand textual meaning effectively. Students who possess strong reading comprehension skills generally perform better academically because many classroom activities depend on students' ability to understand written materials.

In educational contexts, reading comprehension is influenced by many factors such as vocabulary mastery, reading motivation, classroom interaction, learning environment, reading strategies, and students' social experiences. Reading motivation becomes particularly important because motivated students are more likely to engage actively in reading activities and apply effective strategies during comprehension processes. Han et al. (2025) explained that personalized reading materials and interactive learning activities significantly improve students' engagement and reading comprehension performance in English learning contexts.

In Indonesian senior high schools, students often encounter difficulties in reading English texts due to limited vocabulary, lack of reading practice, and low motivation. Some students experience challenges in identifying main ideas, understanding implied meanings, and interpreting textual information critically. These difficulties affect students' classroom participation and learning achievement in English subjects. Rahman et al. (2021) found that Indonesian students' reading comprehension difficulties were strongly related to vocabulary mastery and limited classroom interaction during English learning activities.

Gender differences have also become an important issue in language learning research, particularly in reading comprehension studies. Previous studies indicate that female students tend to demonstrate stronger verbal ability, higher reading motivation, and more active classroom participation than male students. Female students are often more interested in collaborative learning and reading discussions, whereas male students tend to prefer practical and factual materials. Li and Wang (2023) reported that female students generally apply more effective reading strategies and show stronger engagement in language learning activities than male students.

Furthermore, OECD (2022) reported that female students consistently outperform male students in reading literacy across many educational systems worldwide. The report emphasized that reading engagement, motivation, and classroom interaction significantly influence students' reading comprehension achievement. Female students were found to spend more time reading and demonstrate more positive attitudes toward reading activities compared to male students.

In classroom learning situations, students' reading experiences are shaped not only by individual abilities but also by social interactions and learning environments. López-Yáñez et al. (2022) explained that classroom interaction and collaborative learning activities contribute significantly to students' reading comprehension development. Students who actively participate in reading discussions and classroom interactions tend to develop better comprehension skills and stronger confidence in understanding texts.

Although many previous studies have investigated gender differences in reading comprehension, most studies focused on quantitative comparisons of test scores and statistical analyses. Limited studies have explored students' personal experiences, classroom behaviors, perceptions, and learning interactions related to reading comprehension using qualitative approaches, particularly in Indonesian senior high school contexts.

Therefore, this study attempts to explore the reading comprehension experiences of male and female students at SMAN 20 Gowa using a qualitative descriptive approach. This study focuses on students' perceptions, classroom participation, reading motivation, learning behaviors, and challenges encountered during reading comprehension learning activities.

This study aims to answer the following research questions: (1) How do male students perceive reading comprehension learning at SMAN 20 Gowa? (2) How do female students perceive reading comprehension learning at SMAN 20 Gowa? and (3) What differences are found between male and female students in reading comprehension experiences and learning behaviors?

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to English language teaching practices by providing deeper understanding regarding gender-related differences in reading comprehension experiences. The study may also assist teachers in designing more interactive, inclusive, and gender-responsive learning strategies in English reading comprehension classes.

## II. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore students' experiences, perceptions, and learning behaviors related to reading comprehension activities at SMAN 20 Gowa. Qualitative research was selected because it allows researchers to understand participants' experiences and classroom interactions deeply within natural educational settings. According to Creswell and Poth (2021), qualitative research is appropriate for investigating participants' perspectives, social interactions, and learning experiences through descriptive and interpretative analysis. This approach enables researchers to understand how students perceive reading comprehension activities and how gender differences influence students' learning behaviors. The study was conducted at SMAN 20 Gowa during the 2025/2026 academic year. The participants consisted of second-grade students selected purposively based on gender representation and participation in English learning activities. The participants included 18 male and 19 female students who actively attended English reading comprehension classes.

Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Classroom observations were conducted during English learning activities to identify students' classroom participation, reading behaviors, interaction patterns, and engagement in reading discussions. The researcher observed how students responded to teachers' instructions, interacted with classmates, and participated during reading comprehension activities. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore students' perceptions, experiences, reading motivation, and learning difficulties. The interviews focused on students' attitudes toward English reading activities, preferred reading materials, reading strategies, classroom participation, and challenges encountered during reading comprehension learning. The interview format allowed participants to express their experiences freely while enabling the researcher to obtain detailed information relevant to the research objectives.

Document analysis was also conducted by reviewing students' assignments, classroom materials, and reading tasks used during English lessons. The researcher examined how students responded to reading activities and analyzed evidence related to students' reading comprehension performance and classroom engagement. The data collection process was conducted over several classroom meetings to ensure sufficient understanding of students' learning behaviors and classroom interactions. During observations, the researcher recorded important classroom events, students' responses, and interaction patterns in field notes.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. First, interview recordings and observation notes were transcribed carefully. Second, the researcher identified important themes related to students' reading motivation, classroom participation, reading strategies, and learning difficulties. Third, the themes were categorized and interpreted to answer the research questions and identify differences between male and female students' reading comprehension experiences. To ensure data trustworthiness, triangulation techniques were applied by comparing findings obtained from classroom observations, interviews, and document analysis. Member checking was also conducted by confirming interview responses with participants to ensure accuracy and consistency of information. Ethical considerations were also maintained throughout the study. Participants were informed about the research objectives, and confidentiality of personal information was protected during data collection and reporting processes.

### III. RESULT

The findings of this study revealed several important differences between male and female students regarding reading comprehension experiences, learning motivation, classroom participation, and reading strategies at SMAN 20 Gowa.

#### 3.1 Students' Perceptions Toward Reading Comprehension Learning

Based on interview results, female students generally demonstrated more positive perceptions toward reading comprehension learning than male students. Among the 19 female participants, most students stated that reading activities helped them improve vocabulary, communication skills, and academic performance. Female students expressed greater interest in reading narrative and descriptive texts because these texts were considered enjoyable and easier to understand.

Several female participants explained that reading English texts increased their confidence in understanding English expressions and sentence structures. Female students also reported that they frequently practiced reading at home by reading short stories, online articles, and English social media content.

In contrast, many male students perceived reading comprehension activities as difficult and less interesting. Among the 18 male participants, several students stated that they experienced difficulties understanding long passages and unfamiliar vocabulary. Male students generally preferred shorter and more practical reading materials related to technology, sports, and entertainment topics.

Although male students recognized the importance of reading comprehension for academic achievement, many participants admitted that they lacked motivation during reading activities. Some male students explained that they preferred speaking and listening activities rather than reading long English texts.

### 3.2 Classroom Participation and Learning Behaviors

Classroom observations showed significant differences in participation between male and female students during reading comprehension activities. Female students demonstrated greater participation during classroom discussions, question-answer sessions, and collaborative learning activities.

Female participants frequently asked questions, discussed textual meanings, and responded actively during reading lessons. Several female students were also observed helping classmates understand unfamiliar vocabulary and difficult passages. These collaborative interactions appeared to support students' comprehension development and classroom confidence.

Meanwhile, male students generally demonstrated lower classroom participation. During reading discussions, male students were often less communicative and more passive compared to female students. Some male participants rarely asked questions and tended to wait for teachers' explanations before responding to reading tasks.

Observation results also showed that male students were more likely to lose concentration during lengthy reading activities. Several male participants appeared less interested in discussing reading texts and preferred completing tasks individually without active classroom interaction.

### 3.3 Reading Strategies and Learning Difficulties

The findings also revealed differences in reading strategies used by male and female students. Female students tended to apply multiple reading strategies such as rereading passages carefully, highlighting important information, taking notes, and discussing meanings with peers.

These strategies helped female students understand textual information more effectively and increased their confidence during reading activities. Female students also reported that they often used dictionaries and online translation tools to understand unfamiliar vocabulary.

Male students, however, generally applied fewer reading strategies. Many male participants stated that they focused mainly on finding answers to questions rather than understanding the entire text. Several male students admitted that they rarely reread passages and often skipped difficult vocabulary.

Vocabulary mastery became one of the most common difficulties experienced by both male and female students. However, female students appeared more willing to seek assistance from teachers and classmates when encountering comprehension difficulties. Male students tended to avoid asking questions and preferred guessing meanings independently.

### 3.4 Influence of Gender on Reading Comprehension Experiences

The findings indicate that gender differences influenced students' motivation, participation, and reading comprehension experiences. Female students generally demonstrated stronger motivation, more active classroom participation, and more effective reading strategies than male students.

Female students' willingness to communicate, collaborate, and engage in classroom discussions contributed positively to their comprehension experiences. Meanwhile, male students' lower participation and limited strategy use appeared to affect their engagement during reading comprehension activities.

Overall, the findings suggest that gender-related learning behaviors significantly influence students' reading comprehension experiences in English learning contexts at SMAN 20 Gowa.

### 3.5 Students' Interview Responses and Interpretation

The interview findings provided deeper insights into students' perceptions, attitudes, and experiences regarding reading comprehension learning. The responses demonstrated noticeable differences between male and female students in terms of motivation, classroom participation, reading preferences, and learning confidence.

Most female students expressed positive attitudes toward reading comprehension activities. One female participant stated:

"I like reading English stories because I can learn new vocabulary and understand how English sentences are used in daily communication."

This response indicates that female students viewed reading activities not only as academic tasks but also as opportunities to improve language competence and communication skills. Female students generally associated reading activities with self-improvement and academic development.

Another female participant explained:

“When I do not understand difficult words, I usually ask my friends or teacher. Discussing together helps me understand the text better.”

This statement shows that female students tended to use collaborative learning strategies during reading comprehension activities. Female participants demonstrated willingness to communicate, ask questions, and engage actively in classroom interaction. Such collaborative behaviors contributed positively to their reading comprehension experiences.

Several female students also reported that rereading passages and highlighting important information helped them understand reading texts more effectively. One participant mentioned:

“I usually read the text more than once because sometimes I understand the meaning better after reading again.”

The findings suggest that female students applied metacognitive reading strategies more frequently than male students. Female participants appeared more patient and reflective during reading activities, allowing them to develop deeper textual understanding.

In contrast, male students demonstrated different responses regarding reading comprehension learning. Several male participants admitted that reading English texts was difficult and less interesting. One male student stated:

“I do not really like long English texts because there are too many difficult words and I get confused easily.”

This response indicates that vocabulary difficulty became one of the major barriers affecting male students' motivation and engagement during reading activities. Male students often associated reading comprehension with challenging vocabulary and complicated sentence structures.

Another male participant explained:

“I prefer short texts about sports or technology because they are easier and more interesting for me.”

This finding suggests that male students' reading motivation was strongly influenced by reading topics and personal interests. Practical and factual reading materials appeared to increase male students' engagement more effectively than narrative or descriptive texts.

Several male students also admitted that they rarely participated actively in classroom discussions because they lacked confidence in speaking English. One participant reported:

“Sometimes I know the answer, but I am afraid of making mistakes when speaking in class.”

This response demonstrates that classroom anxiety and fear of making mistakes affected male students' classroom participation during reading activities. Male students appeared more hesitant to communicate openly during English lessons.

The interview findings further revealed differences in reading habits between male and female students. Female students generally reported reading English content more frequently outside the classroom, including stories, song lyrics, and social media content. Meanwhile, many male students stated that they only read English materials when completing school assignments.

The findings indicate that female students demonstrated stronger intrinsic motivation toward reading activities, while male students tended to rely more on external academic requirements. Female students appeared to enjoy reading activities naturally, whereas male students often viewed reading tasks as academic obligations.

The interview results also highlighted the importance of teacher support during reading comprehension learning. Both male and female students acknowledged that teachers' explanations and classroom discussions helped them understand difficult texts. However, female students were more likely to seek clarification actively, while male students tended to remain passive even when experiencing comprehension difficulties.

Overall, the interview findings suggest that gender differences significantly influenced students' attitudes, learning confidence, reading strategies, and classroom participation in reading comprehension learning at SMAN 20 Gowa.

### 3.6 Questionnaire Results and Analysis

To strengthen the interview and observation findings, the researcher also distributed questionnaires to 37 students consisting of 18 male students and 19 female students. The questionnaire aimed to identify students' perceptions, motivation, reading habits, classroom participation, and difficulties related to reading comprehension learning.

The questionnaire consisted of several statements related to students' reading comprehension experiences. Students responded using agreement categories including strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. The questionnaire findings were analyzed descriptively to support the research questions of this study.

The first questionnaire item focused on students' interest in reading English texts. The results showed that most female students demonstrated positive attitudes toward reading activities. Approximately 15 out of 19 female students agreed that they enjoyed reading English texts because reading helped them improve vocabulary and language understanding. Meanwhile, only 8 out of 18 male students expressed similar positive responses.

Several male students selected neutral and disagree responses regarding their interest in reading English texts. This finding indicates that female students generally demonstrated stronger reading motivation than male students. The questionnaire results support the interview findings in which female students described reading as enjoyable and useful for improving language skills.

The second questionnaire item examined students' confidence during reading comprehension activities. The findings revealed that female students generally felt more confident participating in reading discussions and asking questions during English lessons. Around 14 female students agreed that classroom discussions helped them understand reading texts better.

In contrast, many male students reported lower confidence during classroom reading activities. Several male participants admitted that they were hesitant to participate in discussions because they were afraid of making mistakes in English. This result is consistent with classroom observation findings showing that male students tended to be more passive during reading discussions.

The third questionnaire item focused on reading strategies used during reading comprehension learning. Most female students reported that they frequently reread texts, highlighted important information, and discussed meanings with classmates when encountering difficulties. About 16 female students agreed that rereading texts helped them improve understanding of reading passages.

Meanwhile, male students reported using fewer reading strategies. Several male participants stated that they preferred reading quickly to find answers to classroom questions rather than understanding the entire text. This finding suggests that female students applied more effective and reflective reading strategies than male students.

Another questionnaire item examined students' vocabulary difficulties during reading activities. Both male and female students acknowledged that unfamiliar vocabulary became one of the major challenges in understanding English texts. However, female students were more likely to seek assistance from teachers or classmates when they encountered difficult vocabulary.

The questionnaire results also showed differences in reading habits outside the classroom. Female students reported reading English content more frequently through stories, social media, song lyrics, and online articles. In contrast, many male students stated that they only read English materials when required by teachers or classroom assignments.

The findings indicate that female students demonstrated stronger intrinsic motivation toward reading activities, while male students relied more on external academic demands. Female students appeared to enjoy reading as part of personal learning development, whereas male students often perceived reading activities as school obligations.

Overall, the questionnaire findings support the interview and observation results of this study. Female students demonstrated more positive perceptions, stronger motivation, more active participation, and more effective reading strategies during reading comprehension learning compared to male students.

These findings answer the research questions by showing that male and female students experienced reading comprehension learning differently. Female students generally showed more positive learning

experiences and greater classroom engagement, while male students experienced lower motivation and participation during reading comprehension activities.

Table 1. Students' Interest in Reading English Texts

Response Category	Male Students (n=18)	Female Students (n=19)
Strongly Agree	2	7
Agree	6	8
Neutral	5	3
Disagree	4	1
Strongly Disagree	1	0

The table above shows that female students demonstrated stronger interest in reading English texts compared to male students. Most female students selected "strongly agree" and "agree," indicating positive attitudes toward reading activities. Meanwhile, several male students selected "neutral" and "disagree," suggesting lower motivation in reading English texts.

Table 2. Students' Confidence During Reading Comprehension Activities

Response Category	Male Students (n=18)	Female Students (n=19)
Strongly Agree	1	6
Agree	5	8
Neutral	6	3
Disagree	5	2
Strongly Disagree	1	0

The findings indicate that female students generally felt more confident participating in reading comprehension discussions and asking questions during classroom learning. Male students showed lower confidence and greater hesitation during reading activities.

Table 3. Students' Reading Strategy Usage

Statement: "I reread texts when I do not understand the meaning."	Male Students	Female Students
Strongly Agree	3	8
Agree	5	8
Neutral	4	2
Disagree	5	1
Strongly Disagree	1	0

The table demonstrates that female students applied rereading strategies more frequently than male students. Female participants tended to use reflective reading strategies to improve comprehension, whereas several male students preferred reading texts only once.

Table 4. Vocabulary Difficulties in Reading Comprehension

Response Category	Male Students (n=18)	Female Students (n=19)
Strongly Agree	8	6
Agree	7	9
Neutral	2	3
Disagree	1	1
Strongly Disagree	0	0

The findings reveal that both male and female students experienced difficulties understanding unfamiliar vocabulary during reading activities. However, interview findings showed that female students were more likely to ask teachers or classmates for clarification.

Table 5. Classroom Participation During Reading Discussions

Response Category	Male Students (n=18)	Female Students (n=19)
Strongly Agree	2	7
Agree	4	8
Neutral	5	3
Disagree	6	1
Strongly Disagree	1	0

The table indicates that female students participated more actively during classroom discussions and collaborative reading activities than male students. Male students tended to demonstrate more passive classroom behavior during reading lessons.

Table 6. Students' Reading Habits Outside the Classroom

Statement: "I often read English materials outside the classroom."	Male Students	Female Students
Strongly Agree	2	6
Agree	4	9
Neutral	5	3
Disagree	6	1
Strongly Disagree	1	0

The findings suggest that female students engaged more frequently in reading English materials outside the classroom compared to male students. Female students reported reading stories, song lyrics, and social media content, while male students mostly read English materials only for academic purposes.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that gender differences significantly influenced students' reading comprehension experiences, classroom participation, motivation, reading habits, and learning strategies during English learning activities at SMAN 20 Gowa. Through interviews, classroom observations, questionnaires, and document analysis, the study revealed that female students generally demonstrated more positive attitudes and stronger engagement toward reading comprehension learning than male students.

One of the major findings concerns students' reading motivation and attitudes toward English reading activities. Female students showed greater interest in reading English texts and considered reading activities beneficial for improving vocabulary, communication skills, and academic achievement. Most female students selected "agree" and "strongly agree" in questionnaire responses related to reading interest, while many male students demonstrated lower enthusiasm toward reading comprehension tasks.

These findings are consistent with previous studies reporting that female students generally demonstrate stronger reading motivation and more positive attitudes toward reading activities. Li and Wang (2023) explained that female students tend to apply more effective language learning strategies and demonstrate stronger engagement in reading comprehension learning because they perceive reading as a meaningful learning activity. Similarly, Merisuo-Storm and Soinen (2022) found that female students spend more time reading voluntarily and demonstrate stronger intrinsic reading motivation compared to male students.

The interview findings support this argument. One female participant stated:

"Reading English stories helps me improve vocabulary and understand English expressions better."

This response indicates that female students associated reading activities with language development and self-improvement. Previous research also found that female students generally develop stronger emotional engagement toward reading activities because they perceive reading as both educational and enjoyable (Sari & Wahyuni, 2021).

In contrast, many male students perceived reading comprehension as difficult and less interesting. Several male participants admitted that unfamiliar vocabulary and long reading passages reduced their motivation during English lessons. One male participant explained:

"Long English texts make me confused because there are too many difficult words."

This finding supports previous studies indicating that male students often demonstrate lower reading engagement and weaker confidence during language learning activities (Logan & Johnston, 2020).

Another important finding concerns classroom participation during reading comprehension learning. Female students demonstrated more active participation during discussions, question-answer sessions, and collaborative reading activities. Classroom observations showed that female students frequently interacted with teachers and classmates during reading lessons.

These findings support López-Yáñez et al. (2022), who emphasized that collaborative classroom interaction contributes significantly to students' reading comprehension development and engagement. Similarly, Khasawneh (2021) found that students who participate actively during classroom reading discussions demonstrate stronger comprehension development and greater confidence in understanding texts.

Several female students reported that discussing difficult vocabulary collaboratively helped them understand reading texts more effectively. One participant stated:

“When I discuss difficult words with friends, I understand the text more easily.”

This finding indicates that collaborative learning environments positively influenced female students' reading comprehension experiences. Female students appeared more comfortable communicating and asking questions during classroom activities.

Meanwhile, male students generally demonstrated lower classroom participation. Observation findings showed that male students tended to remain passive during reading discussions and were less willing to express opinions publicly. Several male students admitted that they were afraid of making mistakes when speaking English in front of classmates.

This finding is consistent with Alghamdi et al. (2022), who found that classroom anxiety and fear of making errors significantly influence male students' participation during language learning activities.

The findings further revealed significant differences in reading strategies between male and female students. Female students demonstrated stronger use of metacognitive and reflective reading strategies such as rereading passages, highlighting important information, taking notes, using dictionaries, and discussing meanings collaboratively.

Questionnaire findings showed that most female students agreed that rereading texts helped them understand reading passages more effectively. Female students also reported using online dictionaries and translation applications frequently when encountering unfamiliar vocabulary.

One female participant explained:

“I usually reread the text several times until I understand the meaning clearly.”

This finding supports previous studies reporting that female students tend to use metacognitive reading strategies more frequently than male students. According to Tavakoli and Koosha (2021), effective strategy use contributes positively to reading comprehension performance because students become more capable of monitoring their understanding during reading processes.

Male students, however, generally demonstrated fewer reading strategies. Several male participants admitted that they focused mainly on answering questions rather than understanding the overall meaning of texts. One male participant stated:

“I usually look directly for the answer instead of reading the whole passage carefully.”

This behavior suggests that male students tended to adopt surface-level reading approaches during comprehension activities. Previous studies similarly found that male students often prioritize task completion over reflective comprehension processes (Khalifa & Al-Mekhlafi, 2020).

Vocabulary mastery emerged as another major challenge influencing students' reading comprehension experiences. Both male and female students acknowledged that unfamiliar vocabulary reduced comprehension and classroom confidence. However, female students appeared more willing to seek assistance from teachers and classmates when encountering difficult vocabulary.

This finding supports Rahman et al. (2021), who reported that vocabulary mastery remains one of the strongest predictors of Indonesian students' reading comprehension achievement. Similarly, Nation (2021) explained that vocabulary knowledge strongly affects students' ability to understand textual meaning and participate actively during reading comprehension activities.

The study also identified differences in students' reading habits outside the classroom. Female students reported reading English materials more frequently through stories, online articles, social media content, and song lyrics. In contrast, many male students stated that they only read English texts when required by teachers or school assignments.

These findings are consistent with OECD (2022), which reported that female students generally demonstrate stronger reading habits and spend more time reading voluntarily compared to male students. Female students' stronger exposure to English reading materials outside classroom environments may contribute positively to vocabulary development and reading fluency.

Furthermore, the findings support Krashen's Input Hypothesis, which emphasizes that language acquisition improves when learners are exposed to meaningful and comprehensible language input regularly (Krashen, 2021).

Another important issue identified in this study concerns students' confidence during classroom participation. Female students demonstrated greater willingness to communicate and collaborate during reading comprehension activities. Meanwhile, male students often remained passive because of anxiety and fear of making mistakes.

This finding aligns with Dewaele and MacIntyre (2021), who found that language anxiety negatively influences students' willingness to communicate during classroom interaction.

The findings of this study also indicate that reading comprehension learning is influenced not only by cognitive ability but also by psychological and social factors such as motivation, confidence, classroom interaction, and learning environment. Students who feel supported and comfortable during classroom activities tend to demonstrate stronger participation and comprehension development.

Therefore, teachers should implement more interactive and gender-responsive teaching strategies during reading comprehension learning. Teachers may provide diverse reading materials aligned with students' interests, encourage collaborative learning activities, and create supportive classroom environments that reduce anxiety and increase confidence during classroom participation.

Providing vocabulary support activities, peer discussions, guided reading exercises, and contextual reading materials may improve students' engagement and reading comprehension experiences. Male students, particularly, may benefit from practical and interest-based reading materials that increase motivation and classroom participation.

Overall, this study contributes to the body of knowledge regarding gender differences in reading comprehension experiences in Indonesian senior high school contexts. Unlike previous quantitative studies focusing mainly on test scores, this study explored students' perceptions, classroom interaction, learning behaviors, reading motivation, and reading experiences comprehensively through qualitative analysis.

The findings demonstrate that reading comprehension learning should be viewed as a multidimensional process influenced by cognitive, emotional, motivational, and social factors. Therefore, effective English reading instruction should consider students' psychological and social learning experiences in addition to academic achievement.

## V. CONCLUSION

This study explored the reading comprehension experiences of male and female students at SMAN 20 Gowa using a qualitative descriptive approach. The findings revealed that gender differences significantly influenced students' reading motivation, classroom participation, reading habits, confidence, and strategy use during English reading comprehension learning.

Female students generally demonstrated stronger interest and more positive attitudes toward reading activities than male students. The findings from interviews, questionnaires, and classroom observations showed that female students were more active during classroom discussions, more willing to ask questions, and more engaged in collaborative learning activities. Female students also demonstrated stronger reading habits outside the classroom and applied more reflective reading strategies such as rereading passages, highlighting important information, and discussing difficult vocabulary with classmates.

In contrast, male students tended to demonstrate lower participation and weaker engagement during reading comprehension activities. Many male students perceived reading English texts as difficult because of unfamiliar vocabulary and lengthy passages. Male students also preferred practical and factual reading materials related to sports, technology, and daily activities. Several male participants admitted that they

lacked confidence during classroom discussions and were afraid of making mistakes when speaking English publicly.

The study further revealed that vocabulary mastery, classroom interaction, learning environment, and reading motivation significantly influenced students' reading comprehension experiences. Female students generally demonstrated stronger confidence and greater willingness to seek assistance from teachers and classmates when experiencing comprehension difficulties, while male students tended to work independently and participated less actively during classroom interaction.

These findings suggest that reading comprehension learning should not focus only on cognitive achievement but also consider students' emotional, motivational, and social learning experiences. Teachers are encouraged to implement more interactive, collaborative, and gender-responsive teaching strategies to improve students' engagement in reading comprehension learning. Providing varied reading materials aligned with students' interests, encouraging classroom discussions, and supporting students' confidence may help improve reading comprehension experiences for both male and female students.

Overall, this study contributes to the body of knowledge regarding gender differences in reading comprehension experiences in Indonesian senior high school contexts. Future researchers are recommended to conduct broader studies involving larger participants and different educational settings to further examine the relationship between gender, motivation, classroom interaction, and reading comprehension development.

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