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Mothers Reading to their Children

It is generally accepted by reading and education experts that parents should read out loud to their children every day, beginning at infancy, for 15-20 minutes a day. This shared experience has many benefits to the child, all which contribute to increased literacy at home and in the classroom. Most parents have been exposed to this advice, but not all have. Some parents may feel too busy to read to their children, while others are sure to include reading time every night. Many professionals in the education field may assume that full time working mothers would have less time to read to their children than stay at home mothers do. The purpose of this study is to determine if there is a difference in the amount of hours spent reading with children depending on if the mother is working full time or stays in the home.

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited from a discussion forum consisting of over 5000 members who come to the discussion forum to discuss current events, and other general topics. 33 ladies responded to one of two simple surveys.

Measures/Procedure

Two dedicated threads were created. For Stay at Home Mothers, the survey was as follows: *“How many hours a week do you read to or with each of your children? I am considering “stay at home mother” to mean you do not have any employment, or other recurring responsibilities that keep you away from the home for more than 10 hours a week.”*

For Working Mothers, the survey read: *“How many hours a week do you read to or with each of your children? I am considering “full time work” to mean any recurring responsibility that keeps you out of the home for 35 hours or more a week (for example, a part time job of 25 hours plus class participation of 10 hours).”* In both threads the women were advised to send the researcher a private message containing the hours if they did not feel comfortable posting on the public forum. 16 women responded to the STAY AT HOME MOM thread, and 17 women responded to the WORKING MOM thread.

This researcher hypothesized that there would be a statistically significant difference between the two groups of women.

Results

An independent t-test was conducted to determine if there was a difference between the means of hours read by working mothers and stay at home mothers. Stay at Home moms were labeled group 1, while Working moms were labeled group 2. No significant difference was found between the two groups ($t = -.247$, $df = 31$, $p = .806$, $d = -.086$). The Levene's Test for Equality of Variances shows that the variances between both group 1 and group 2 are equal ($p = .860$).

Group Statistics

group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
hours 1.00	16	3.2188	2.02665	.50666
2.00	17	3.4029	2.24008	.54330

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
hours	Equal variances assumed	.032	.860	-.247	31	.806	-.18419	.74521	-1.70405	1.33567
	Equal variances not assumed			-.248	30.957	.806	-.18419	.74289	-1.69940	1.33102

Discussion

It was hypothesized that there would be a difference in the amount of hours spent reading to children between stay at home moms and working moms. The results of this study demonstrate no such difference. There are several possible explanations for this outcome. Perhaps this sample of working mothers were determined to read to their children a significant amount throughout the week. Or, perhaps stay at home mothers are just as busy as working mothers, leaving them less time read to their children. In fact, some stay at home mothers reported to this researcher that they felt badly about the amount of hours spent reading to their child, when they felt they had should have so much time available.

These results also imply that whether the mother is working full time or not is not an important factor in how much their children are read to. Rather, it may help support the contention that socioeconomic status and the level of education of the mother are relevant factors to how much children are read to in the home.