**Metadata**

**Fiction Book Reading and Wellbeing: A Qualitative Investigation Across the Lifespan**

This document accompanies the dataset (interview transcripts), data collection tools (interview schedule and surveys), participant information, and ethics (information and consent forms) documentation. It aims to describe and summarise the project and data. It includes:

1. Project summary
2. Participant summaries
3. Qualitative dataset summaries
4. Qualitative data processing and preparation details
5. Outputs
6. Access and Copyright
7. **Project summary**

This project, funded under the title *‘Reading and Wellbeing: Developmental and Diverse Perspectives’* was funded by the Leverhulme Trust (grant reference: RPG-2021-344) and carried out in the UK from September 2022 - February 2024. It was led by Dr Sarah McGeown (Moray House School of Education and Sport, University of Edinburgh) in collaboration with Professor Gemma Moss (Institute of Education, UCL), with Scottish Book Trust (Katherine Wilkinson) and National Literacy Trust (Dr Christina Clark) as third-sector/literacy partners. Dr Nicola Currie was appointed as postdoctoral researcher for the 18-month project and collected all data.

This was a large qualitative research project (n = 78), with individual interviews carried out with children (n = 24, aged 9-11), young people (n = 19, aged 15-17), adults (n = 20, aged 31-46) and older adults (n = 15 aged 63-83). Opportunity sampling was used for recruitment, recruiting only participants who enjoyed reading/read fiction books, as this was required to answer the interview questions. All interviews with children were in person (in school), while all interviews with young people, adults and older adults were carried out online (with the exception of one older adult who was interviewed over the phone). All participants also provide identity information and completed a short reading survey prior to the interview.

Research Aims:

1. To explore readers’ perspectives on the relationship between reading fiction and wellbeing across the lifespan.
2. To examine whether there are similarities and differences in readers’ perspectives of reading fiction and wellbeing at different ages.

Specifically, the project sought to understand readers’ perspectives of how fiction book reading had supported their wellbeing, with wellbeing examined in relation to positive affect (hedonism), connection and personal growth (eudaimonia). Further, it explored how social context influenced their reading habits and experiences. Interview questions were intentionally kept as similar as possible to allow for comparisons across all four age categories, and to explore the three wellbeing concepts (positive affect, connection, personal growth) in depth. The interview questions were piloted prior to use (n = 9, across all age categories) in 2022, with the majority of data collection completed in 2023.

The study was preregistered on the Open Science Framework in January 2023 and this includes the research aims and questions, design plan, sampling strategy, data collection (all final tools used in data collection are uploaded as attachments) and analysis plan. The preregistration can be found here: <https://osf.io/n6rfv>.

Please note that initially the researchers used opportunity sampling for all age groups, but then moved to recruiting participants with a specific identity characteristic (male or transgender) due to lack of representation during initial recruitment.

Keywords: reading, wellbeing, book, fiction, lifespan

1. **Participant summaries (split by age)**

**Children** (n = 24, 15 female, 9 male). Children were aged 9-11. Six self-identified as English, 6 as British, 4 as Scottish, 3 as English/Welsh, 2 as British/English, 1 as Polish, 1 as Chinese/Indian and 1 as Malaysian. Three identified as having English as an additional language. Two identified as having a disability, described as hearing aids (n = 1) and dyslexia and anxiety (n = 1). Sixteen were living in England (North West) and 8 were living in Scotland at the time of the interviews.

**Young People** (n = 19, 11 female, 7 male, 1 prefer not to respond). Young people were aged 15-17. Eight self-identified as Scottish, 1 as English, 1 as Chinese, 1 as White and Asian, 1 as Scottish and German, 1 as Scottish and French, 1 as Pakistani, 1 as African, 1 as British and Northern Irish, 1 as Northern Irish. Seven identified as having English as an additional language. Two identified as having a disability and one preferred not to respond. All 19 were living in Scotland at the time of the interviews. Four voluntarily provided additional information including: I am in the process of a diagnosis (n =1), I have ADHD and autism (n = 1), I have recently moved to Scotland and spent most of my life in Arab countries (n = 1) and I have autism (n = 1).

**Adults** (n = 20, 13 female, 5 male, 2 non-binary/non-conforming). Adults were aged 31 – 46. Nine identified as Scottish, 3 as British, 2 as English, 2 as Polish, 1 as White-other, 1 as British, 1 as Irish, 1 as White Scottish/English. Three identified as having English as an additional language. Nineteen were in employment (15 full time, 4 part time). Ten did not report caring responsibilities (parent or carer), 7 were parents, 2 were carers, and 1 was a parent and carer. Four identified as having a disability and one preferred not to respond. Sixteen were living in Scotland and four were living in England (various locations) at the time of the interviews. Eleven held University PG degrees, 8 held University UG degrees, 1 held College/trade/technical/vocational qualification. Six voluntarily provided additional information including: Sexuality – pan/bisexual (n = 1), ME/CFS (n = 1), queer/lesbian (n = 1), lived in Asia (China, HK, Japan) for 16 years (n = 1), aphantasia (n = 1).

**Older Adults** (n =15, 10 female, 5 male). Adults were aged 63=83, although 4 did not disclose age. Six self-identified as Scottish, 4 as British, 3 as English, and 2 preferred not to respond. None identified as having English as an additional language. All were retired. Two identified as having caring responsibilities. One identified as having a disability. Eleven were living in Scotland at the time of interviews, three in England (two North West, one South East), and one did not disclose location. Eight held University UG degrees, five held University PG degrees and two preferred not to respond. None identified as transgender.

Prior to interviews, all participants were asked to complete short surveys to report on their fiction reading attitudes (e.g., enjoyment, confidence) and activities (e.g., frequency of reading, genres read). Three slightly different surveys were created; however, all asked the same questions. The results of these surveys are available in the Excel file (all participant information file).

1. **Qualitative dataset summaries (split by age)**

All interview were written up in their entirety, with personally identifiable information removed. Decisions on anonymising the dataset are found in Section 4. Following processing and preparation, transcript lengths were as follows:

**Children.** Transcript length ranges from 1008 – 5006 words (average 2362 words). Full dataset = 56,684

**Young People.** Transcript length ranges from 1799 - 4797 (average 2999 words). Full dataset = 56, 985.

**Adults.** Transcript length ranges from 4284 -16749 (average 7631 words). Full dataset = 152,622

**Older Adults**. Transcript length ranges from 3230 – 9280 (average 6218 words). Full dataset = 93,270.

**Total dataset length** = 359, 561,

1. **Qualitative data processing and preparation:**

Four datasets (one for each age group) have been created. Each dataset is in a single Word document with participant identifier at start of each interview. This participant identifier is the same as that used in the participant information file (Excel). For reference, RWC (child) RWYP (young person) RWA (adult) and RWOA (older adult) and INTERVIEWER (interviewer) are used.

In the qualitative dataset, all interview content was transcribed including additional information (e.g., pause, laughter), however information was removed or redacted for purposes of anonymity or removal of irrelevant information. This is documented as follows:

Remove personally identifiable references (e.g., name, age) and insert ANONYMISED NAME / ANONYMISED AGE / ANONYMISED PERSONAL INFORMATION

Remove reference to specific book titles or authors and insert ANONYMISED BOOK TITLE or ANONYMISED BOOK AUTHOR

Remove reference to any specific geographic location (country, city, town, island etc) and insert ANONYMISED GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

Remove reference to specific mental health condition (anxiety, depression etc) and insert ANONYMISED MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION

Remove reference to specific neurodivergent identity (ADHD, Autism) and insert ANONYMISED NEURODIVERGENT IDENTITY

Remove reference to specific reading difficulty (dyslexia) and insert ANONYMISED READING DIFFICULTY

Remove reference to school name or workplace and insert ANONYMISED SCHOOL / WORKPLACE (as appropriate)

Remove reference to person if mentioned by name (first or second) and insert ANOYMISED PERSON NAME

Remove reference to pet type or name and insert ANOYMISED PET

If participants were off topic or off task (e.g., talking about unrelated topics, interruption due to school bell or a phone call) this detail was removed and termed REDACTED IRRELEVANT INFORMATION

The data was transcribed by three researchers, and anonymised during transcription. This anonymisation process was checked by a different researcher prior to upload.

1. **Outputs**

Outputs associated with the project and dataset (as of 1st June 2025)

Academic articles:

Currie, N., Webber, C., Wilkinson, K., Clark, C., Moss, G., & McGeown, S. (2025a). How Does Reading Fiction Support Adolescents’ Wellbeing? A Qualitative Study Examining Positive Affect, Connection and Personal Growth. *Reading Psychology*, 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02702711.2025.2504974>

Currie, N.K., Wilkinson, K., & McGeown, S. (2025b). Reading Fiction and Psychological Well-being During Older Adulthood: Positive Affect, Connection and Personal Growth. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *60*(1), 1-15. Article e605. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.605>

Other outputs associated with the project (as of 1st June 2025)

Book chapter

Currie, N., & McGeown, S. (2025). Fiction Books and Benefits to Wellbeing (Chapter 5). In Reading for Pleasure: International perspectives. Cremin, T., & McGeown, S. (Eds.). Routledge.

Blogposts:

<https://www.bera.ac.uk/blog/reading-and-wellbeing-exploring-the-relationship-between-reading-fiction-and-wellbeing-across-the-lifespan>

<https://www.scottishbooktrust.com/articles/reading-and-wellbeing-exploring-perspectives-across-the-lifespan>

<https://www.scottishbooktrust.com/articles/reading-fiction-supports-wellbeing-in-older-adulthood>

Future outputs related to this project will be uploaded here:

<https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/literacylab/previous-projects/readwell/>

1. **Access Level**

Open. Users can access this open data collection without registration. A Creative Commons Attribution NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Licence (CC) has been applied. Copyright is held by investigators named in the project.