

A Walking and Talking Library: a Study on the Impact of the Strategy “Read – aloud” on Older Adults with Vision Impairments

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Abstract

The study aims to investigate the effectiveness of read aloud strategy on old lives with vision impairments for reducing loneliness and social isolation. Read aloud is an activity that incorporates variations in pitch, tone, pace, volume, pauses, eye contact, questions, and comments and provides cognitive stimulation to older adults. For older adults who loved to read all their lives, listening to someone read to them can bring profound comfort and joy. However, unlike in Western countries reading aloud is not a popular concept in Asia. 8 respondents (between 62 – 77 years) were selected considering family support, easy access, willingness to try out the concept of reading aloud, and level of vision impairment for the research. The majority (5) were female adults. An open-ended questionnaire was utilized to collect data after exposing them to 8 sessions (3- 4 hours) during 4 months. Various reading materials are used according to the preference of adults. Most loved materials by males were comic stories while females loved to listen to short stories mainly. Reading novels was not productive as most of them could not remember the previous session. The interest of older adults in read-aloud activities improved considerably after each session. Willingness to adopt the concept to eradicate loneliness and social isolation showcased their willingness to social engagement. It was evident that those who had the habit of reading could easily concentrate on the activities and sometimes they could predict the next part of the story. Studies proved that social isolation and loneliness caused by vision impairment can be reduced by reading aloud with the assistance of family or caregivers. This research concludes the need for large print reading materials for visually impaired adults, a special library corner for the elderly, and the introduction of read-aloud activities for the elderly especially institutionalized.

Keywords: Reading- aloud, Older adults, Vision impairment, Social isolation, Loneliness