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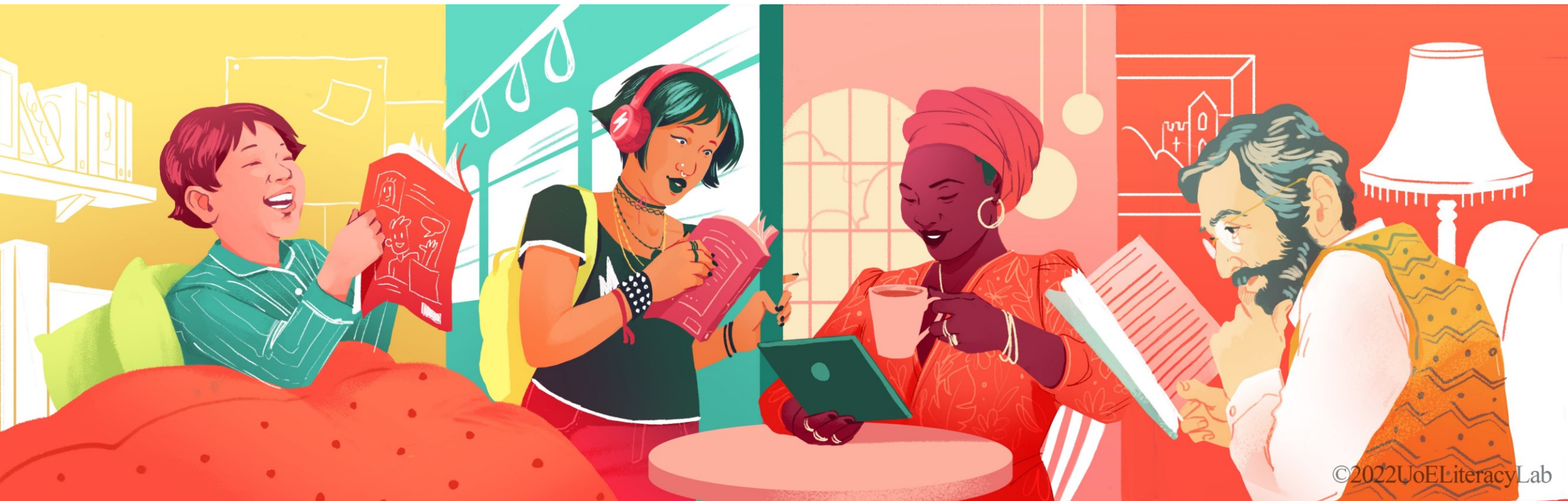
Reading and Wellbeing

Qualitative insights from children

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Readers' perceptions of the relationship between their fiction book reading and psychological wellbeing (positive affect, connection, personal growth)

Research across the lifespan



**Reading
& Wellbeing**

Positive affect

- Fiction reading elicits a wide range of positive emotions: happiness, reassurance, relaxation, excitement...
- Emotions can be elicited as a result of book content or personal memories
- Diverse emotions associated with fiction reading (e.g., sadness)
- Fiction books can provide safe spaces for children to work through difficult emotions, or empathise with characters

Mar et al., 2011; McGeown et al., 2020

- Need to better understand the nuance and complexity of emotions aroused from fiction reading.



Connection

- Fiction books often portray the social world we live in and have potential to fulfil basic human needs for connection.
- Children report feelings of connection to fictional characters and real-life others through their reading.

Eekhof et al., 2022; McGeown et al., 2020

- Until now, these different dimensions of connection have not been studied simultaneously.



Personal Growth

- Fiction reading can improve children's language and literacy skills, and their knowledge and understanding of the world, themselves and others
- Indeed, fiction reading can support self-awareness, self-acceptance, perspective taking, empathy, etc

Eekhof et al., 2022; Torppa et al., 2019

- Important to hear children's voices in terms of how reading supports their personal growth.

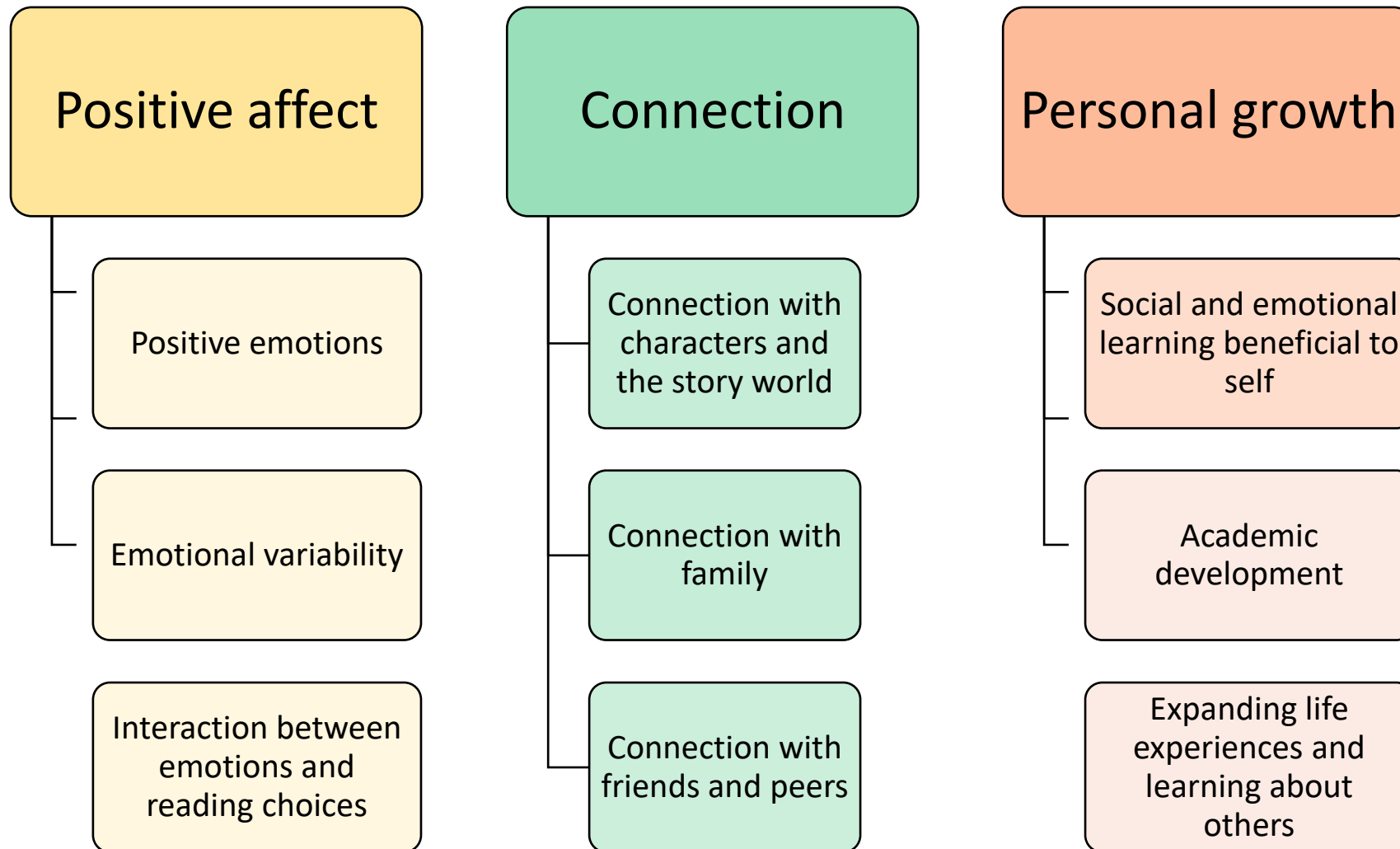


Method

- In total, 24 children (aged 9-11, 15 girls) participated from three (2 England, 1 Scotland) primary schools.
- Children were predominately White British
- All were identified by teachers as children who enjoyed reading fiction,
- Interview schedule was piloted prior to use, focusing on three dimensions of wellbeing
- Study was preregistered: <https://osf.io/n6rfv> with interview schedule attached.



Results



Positive affect

Positive emotions

'I feel excited and like don't wanna put the book down.' (Girl, 10)

'I just feel genuinely happy reading them. It's just like, a really happy thing' (Boy, 9)

Emotional variability

'It makes me feel like excited and anxious for the character.' (Girl, 9)

'sometimes I might feel sad cause like a character has died that I really liked.' (Boy, 10)

Interaction between emotions and reading choices

'I just choose the books that I like, and it doesn't matter which mood I'm in.' (Boy, 10)

'But then if I read a funny book I can use that comedy and also it just makes me feel up and good. Happy.' (Girl, 11)

Connection

Connection with fictional characters and the story world

'sometimes I already knew what they were going through and I feel sorry for them.' (Girl, 11)

'The more you relate to something the more you can like feel in the story.' (Boy, 10)

Connection with family

'I like to talk to my mum about it because my mum really likes reading too' (Girl, 11)

'what I quite like doing is reading with somebody else, like somebody else reading a book to me. I really like that actually' (Boy, 9)

Peers

'when I read a book that's like about friendship and stuff, I just see how good that friendship is and I want that to happen with my friends' (Girl, 11)

'its nice to share book recommendations and I've got some of the best books I've ever read from recommendations' (Boy, 11)

Personal growth

Social and Emotional Learning Beneficial to Self

'be yourself' and that's something that I don't often do. So I'd say that's quite helpful from a fiction book.' (Boy, 9)

'And it's just made me feel happy, sad, confused, question myself and, I think that's why I'm now at this stage that I can actually like, say my feelings out loud...' (Girl, 10)

Academic Development

'Definitely drawing because I never used to like to draw. But now when I see a book and the character it doesn't have a picture, I like to try and draw them' (Girl, 10)

'I think its improved my writing, especially like my descriptive writing and describing like a character.' (Girl, 10)

Expanding life experiences and learning about others

'it makes me understand that like people are fighting battles that you have no idea about' (Boy, 11)

it's given me a lot more empathy for different people. It's made me learn, learn about people from different cultures' (Girl, 9)



Reflections and implications

- Rich and diverse wellbeing benefits from reading fiction books
- However, not all children have these positive experiences with reading books
- Children need access to quality books (and other texts) and need to develop the skills to choose books which align with their interests, preferences, lives, experiences and abilities. Children may also benefit from support in reflective reading practices.
- Love to Read: <https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/lovetoread/>





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Thank you for listening

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