

Factors Affecting Reading Habits Of Undergraduate Students At University Level

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Abstract

Reading is an interactive practice that can make a person better than others because of awareness and the development of critical thinking skills. This research analyzed variables affecting students' reading habits at Hazara University and identified strategies for solving these variables. The analysis is qualitative and the students have been interviewed in a semi-structured manner. The data was analyzed through thematic analysis. Lack of access to the library and the internet, use of electronic media for entertainment, inability to buy books, lack of time, and a busy academic schedule are all factors that influence students' reading habits. The majority of students read both fiction and nonfiction, while a few do reading for the sole purpose of passing their exams. According to the results, teachers should recommend different books and writers to their students for reading. The administration will conduct pre-surveys and provide books based on the interests of students, and the instructor may encourage students to learn.

Key Words: Reading Habit, Undergraduate Students, University.

INTRODUCTION

Reading from printed or written words is an immersive sense-making process and is essential to success in any academic endeavor and, indeed, in life. The reading habit of a person is established over time; it therefore goes beyond the ability to just read and write to play a very important role in the everyday life of a person to a point where it grows into a habit and eventually a culture (Mlay, Sabi, Tsuma, & Langmia, 2015). The reading habit affects, in particular, the promotion of one's personal growth and social change in general. Daily and systematic reading sharpens the mind, refines emotions, increases tastes and provides insights for one's life and thus prepares an individual to participate effectively in social, religious, cultural and political life (Lone, 2012).

Mlay et al., (2015) identified that the school culture, home culture and disposable income have an impact on students' reading habits, and that ICT has an impact on reading. Technologies now not only affect students learning and studying in the classroom, but also affect their home reading habits. Chauhan and Lal, (2012) recorded that students read online information more than offline information, because it allows access to reading materials more accessible and faster. Reading is known to be a fundamental factor in learners' academic achievement. Awareness, communication skills, and academic writing abilities are established through reading. The amount of knowledge learned is depends on the content we read, and the selection of reading material depends on students interest.

After continuous comprehension of academic subjects and passing exams, students develop reading habits, which are a well-planned and deliberate style of learning. Akabuike and Asika (2012) claimed that many students read only to pass their examination, not for the acquisition of fun and information. To a great degree, the academic achievements of students are determined by reading habits. Both reading and academic achievements are interconnected and reliant on one another. Some students have solid reading habits, while others have bad reading habits.

Academic achievement is the attainment of information and skills set as benchmarks by an educational institution (Bashir & Mattoo, 2012). He also stated that during early education, reading habits could be established and properly taught how to read. One can explore him or herself by reading and can help to better understand one's own experiences. According to Greene (2001), at young school age, reading practice can evolve and once established it can last one's lifetime.

According to Olson (2002) Printed text is the relationship between the writer and the reader in a specific communicative situation. Reading produces analytical thought in which the reader discovers a particular capacity, such as learning, challenging, anticipating and drawing conclusions. In this scientific world, where change is inevitable, knowledge, information sources and services, and access to information are undergoing rapid changes. It is a reality that, compared to just a knowledgeable person, a person with updated information can be easily adjusted to the changing changes in the world. "Today a reader, tomorrow a leader" is a very significant quote.

In addition, President Harry S. Truman told, "Not all readers are leaders, but all leaders are readers." By reading, a large proportion of knowledge is obtained. Özbay (2007) described that "reading is

the process of the brain evaluating and making sense of signs and symbols perceived through the eyes" (p.4).

Reading is seen to have a significant influence on mind development, as when reading the text is converted into mental concepts, symbols are interpreted, meaning is derived, and a structure is formed in the brain (Güneş, 2007). Students come from a range of academic backgrounds, so their reading preferences are complex. People nowadays use a number of technology on a regular basis, which is why they do not have enough time to read books because they can easily access all of the information they need on the internet. They are active much of the time using various platforms for social networking.

The goal of this study is to examine various factors influencing students' reading habits and to find out how university students grow their reading habits.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To explore the factors affecting the reading habits of University undergraduate students.
- To find out possible strategies for developing a reading habit University undergraduate students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading is considered to be an art, and it provides a foundation for an individual's perception of life that can establish his or her worldview. Ameyaw and Anto (2018) stated that reading not only leads to personal and mental growth, but also to access to social, economic and civic life. Recently, the decline of reading habit among generation is due to the advent of electronic media, different forms of social interaction and their interest in social networking, e-gaming, and music (Akanda, Hoq, & Hasan, 2013).

According to Blaha and Bennett (1993) "A habit is a characteristic behavioral pattern that is learnt and reinforced in a manner realized in every case automatically". Habits enter our lives at a slow pace and, after a certain time become a habit. After some time, habits become a need if they are not abandoned (Aksaçlioğlu & Yılmaz, 2007). Reading is known as a knowledge acquisition technique, converted into a habit, and another term called "reading habit" comes into being. The habit of reading is an act that the person practices as a need and a source of pleasure in constant, frequent and vital ways throughout his or her life (Yılmaz, 1993). Reading practice provides a base for individual lifelong learning and must be practiced periodically during life (Odabaş, Odabaş, & Polat, 2008).

One of the significant methods for long-term learning is reading. To deal with the demands of the 21st century, learners have to adapt at an unparalleled pace to the social and technical changes that take place. Education relies primarily on language competency in these circumstances. Makotsi (2005) opined that the main source of acquisition of new knowledge, skills and information is reading of different materials especially newspapers, books, television and computers (Makotsi, 2005). Consequently, the production of good reading habits is key to achieving quality education.

A person can broaden his horizons, identify, expand and increase his interest through reading. Reading leads to a deeper comprehension of the universe and of itself and other human beings. The root of self-education and lifelong learning is the ability to read. Reading is not only a source of pleasure but also a necessity; it is the fundamental instrument of education (Makotsi, 2005).

The development of Internet and Information Technology (ICT) has heralded a change in the delivery and access of reading materials. The university education is the mature stage of student life, and in this period, they often and inevitably do reading. This time is favorable for gaining enjoyment,

awareness, and consciousness by reading (Yılmaz, Köse, & Korkut, 2009). People between the ages of 17 and 25 who receive education at the final stage of formal education are referred to as university youth. They have built a scientific mentality, have created a distinct culture of young people, and will be society's leaders. The continuity of university students' interest in reading and reading practices is critical in terms of being role models for children and young people. (Saracaloğlu, Bozkurt, & Serin, 2003). The following are some of factors affecting reading habit of students.

Absence of the Culture of Reading

Soroya and Ameen (2016) researched the reading habits of various groups of people, including children, teens, men, and women, and discovered that print and online media, such as daily newspapers, government reports, blogs, tweets, and debates, could be related to shifting reading habits in the digital age. Reading habits are diminishing as a result of widespread use of modern devices. According to Gallup Pakistan (2011), only 28% of Pakistanis around the country read books (other than textbooks), down from 46% in 2002. Teachers primarily concentrate on academic activities due to lack of time, and they do not encourage the culture of reading. People believe the oral knowledge they obtain from their elderly members of the family and not eager to read because of audio and video technologies. The Pakistan Economic Review reported that the nation is far behind the world in reading habit. Students' low reading and comprehension is a barrier for their academic success.

Poverty

In Pakistan, about 39% of the population lives in poverty. They fail to meet their basic needs, which is why they cannot afford to purchase books or pay school fees. Many parents stop sending their children to school because they are uninterested in reading (Oni, 2007). Moreover, (Omoegun, 2007) found that only family background is not

responsible factor that affects the reading habits of students. However, it is very difficult for the students from low socio-economic background to compete with the students from a high socio-economic background in their academic advancement. Not only Socio-economic factors but also the availability of library and information resources is a factor fostering reading of the students.

Different studies had shown that family income has a significant impact on the reading habit of students'. Oni (2007) and Omoegun (2007) further explained that students from high socio-economic background have the chances and access to purchase books and use the ICT for reading books.

Poor Education System

In Pakistani society, students read for just passing the examination. Akabuike and Asika (2012) stated that student read to pass examinations and to do assignments. He further noted that the absence of library period in their time table and absence of library in homes are major problems affecting reading habit. Short and Pierce (1990) pointed out the reasons/ causes of lack of reading habit in students are those teachers, who are not knowledgeable about children's literature, they do not know the way to utilize the available books to enrich students' knowledge and to influence students towards reading.

Inadequate Library Systems

Another concern is the shortage of libraries and lack of reading materials. Libraries are considered as the agents of, social, educational, economic and political changes. In Pakistani school, the libraries have not enough facilities and reading materials and they are not functional. At the same time, there are very few Public libraries and even its condition is not good. According to Krolak (2006) in

Finland, most of the people (80%) use public libraries regularly, and they are on borrowing 20 items per year from these libraries. They try to balance out social differences by Finnish schools and libraries. He also demonstrated that the greatest link between social context and educational achievement is observed in Germany.

Library Staff

Mostly Library staffs are not properly trained and committed to their profession. People often express their frustration with their unprofessional conduct. Due to lack of competent staff, usually, a junior clerk is promoted to become the librarian. Therefore this type of staff cannot effectively handle the library to make a profound impact in terms of handling information to people/students as they have a lack of professional training (Kunaka, 1998). Celik, B. (2019) recommended that friendly and trained library staff could develop the reading habit of students. They can provide effective support to students in selection of reading and learning materials. Therefore libraries and its professional staff play a vital role in development of reading habit, by providing reading and learning materials to them (Singh, 2003).

Electronic Media

Reading is strongly influenced by electronic media. New digital technology such as electronic media, especially various types of video entertainment, television channels, the use of mobile phones, and the rapid growth of various social media websites are affecting the reading habit (The Hindu, 2004). Students spend more time on digital media i.e. browsing the internet, playing with phones, and sending nonstop SMSs tend to be the norm, just for the sake of entertainment and enjoyment. For most schoolchildren and adults, reading a book or other

written material in a quiet or peaceful corner of a library or at home has become an obsolete idea (The Hindu, 2004). Obama (2008) said in his speech that students' progress is in doubt until they convert their priority from watching television to reading. Active learning from books, according to Shabi and Udofia (2009), is superior to passive learning from television and video games. When children are not reading or writing, they spend their time watching television or playing video games, according to Kaufman (2007). Palani (2012) reflects a major concern that technology will take hold of our lives and affect the habit of reading because, as a result of the effects of mass media, people display little interest in any form of reading. Abidin, Mohammadi and Jesmin (2011) found that mostly young respondents spent one to three hours on the internet (emails, movie reviews, and reading comic strips, tiktok etc). A very few portion of the students hardly read Online magazines, online news, and online e-books.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative analysis project. Written and oral responses are used in the qualitative design, and written and oral responses will vary from one respondent to the next. Data in qualitative research is not presented in numerical form. In most cases, but not always, the information obtained is in the form of written responses. The study adopted qualitative research design to explore the factors affecting reading habit of undergraduate students. Therefore, only 12 undergraduate students of department of education from Hazara University were selected through convenience sampling. These students were interviewed through a semi structured interview protocol consisted of 11 questions related to the study objectives. Each interview took at least 20 minutes.

DATA ANALYSIS

The collected data was transcribed and organized. It was read and re-read for the purpose of analysis

of data. The data was analyzed through thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is used to analyze data to develop theme/s that relates to the data. The Researchers did a thematic analysis in six stages, in first stage to the researchers read the data to become familiar with the data. In second stage initial codes were developed, at third stage codes were reread to search themes in data, at fourth stage the themes were reviewed and modified. In fifth stage, themes were defined and finally at sixth stage it was reported.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings related to factors affecting the reading habit of students are:-

The home atmosphere is one of the most critical influences, since this is where students grow their reading habits. Parents, siblings, and family, play a role in guiding children to develop a reading habit outside of the classroom (Hayes da Chokievicz, 2006; Macionis, 2004). Yusof (2010) discovered the relationship and influence of familial factors including income, parents' educational level, career, parents' motivation to read, and home reading environment. The current research also discovered that a parent's education, as well as their economic status, has an effect on their children's reading habits.

One respondent (R-8) said, "I was very fond of reading since from my childhood but I was not able to purchase expensive books because of my parent's economic condition."

According to Barbosa, Ramos, Araújo and Almeida (2006), Adetunji and Olagunju) and (Okioga, 2013) identified social and financial status of students which depended on their parents income, education and occupation, effecting the reading habit.

The study found that mother education is an important factor for development of reading habit in kids.

Such as one of the (R3) said that, "I had started reading because of my mother. She always read different books and tells us about the book in the form of short story."

- Illiterate parents, on the other hand, are unable to assist their children in the collection of suitable books. It was discovered that most students' reading habits are not established because of their parents' lack of education, as they have never experienced their parents reading. Without this, students are unable to buy books due to lack of financial support from their parents.
- The majority of students read both fiction and nonfiction books for entertainment and exam preparation. Majority of the students claimed that they read a book to prepare for various entry exams. They also read books to develop their writing abilities. Emenyonu (1993) documented similar findings in the Nigerian context, stating that Nigerian students' reading habits are low because they read only to pass exams and not for fun. Students mostly read to gain knowledge and for personal satisfaction, while they choose social media and busy schedule at school as the reasons which affect their reading habits (Skenderi & Ejupi, 2017).
- One respondent (R7) stated, "I read books only for academic purpose, just for preparation and pass exams".

Students are unable to read additional books due to their busy schedules. Students spend more time on planning academic assignments than reading

non-academic content, (Owusu-Acheaw & Larson, 2014). Students learn in order to pass their tests.

- Reading habit is affected by the reading medium, which can be either softcopy (e-books, journals) or hardcopy (books). It was discovered that reading from a hardcopy is simple and easy, and that different details can be highlighted easily. Students' access to the internet is an issue not only at school, but also at home. Softcopy is based on the internet's availability. They only used the internet for social media because it is less expensive than uploading or reading e-books online. Unfortunately, due to heavy use of social media, reading habits are declining.

One respondent (R5) said that "I read from hard copy because it is comfortable to read and always underline important points of the book".

Current study found that majority of students tends to read hard copy reading materials because soft copy reading not only affect eyesight but also causes fatigue. These results are consistent with the results of previous studies (Bodomo, Lam, & Lee, 2003; Liu, 2005; Bodomo, Lam, & Lee, 2003 and Vandenhoeck, 2013). Despite this affinity, they tend to read soft copy due to the ease with which they can acquire reading content. Huang, Capps, Blacklock, and Garza, (2014) claim that the internet, including social networking platforms, has influenced the reading patterns of college students in the United States, reducing the amount of time students devote to both academic and extracurricular reading. A few students read books for the purpose to gain knowledge and improve vocabulary.

One of the respondents (R-2) said that "I read different books just for the seeking of knowledge."

The amount of free time available to students has an effect on their reading habits. They feel the semester system is complicated, and they are often preoccupied with academic tasks and unable to find time to read books.

Two participants reported that "due to tough routine we cannot read extra books other than our course relevant books."

- One of the respondents claimed that they do not have enough time to read due to studies, too much academic workload, and a hectic daily routine.
- Reading habits affected by the range of reading content, such as author names, attractive titles, and quality of book print.
- One respondent said: "I select book on the bases of title and print quality," another respondent said that "I select book on the behalf of writer name".

Some recommendations for the creation of a reading habit were made by the respondents. Teachers and administrators could play an important role in the development of a reading habit. A teacher can suggest various books with the names of the writers to their students for reading, and the administration can perform a pre-survey and provide books based on the preferences of the students. Teachers should educate their students about the benefits of reading books, give them reading assignments, and ask them questions about the books they read the next day, and administrators should have well-organized libraries and improve students' interest in reading by assigning them various reading tasks.

CONCLUSIONS

The Followings conclusions are drawn from findings.

- Reading habits are influenced by the home environment, especially the parents' education and socioeconomic status.
- Students read fiction and nonfiction for a number of reasons, including assignments, entrance tests, exams, information, and enjoyment.
- The availability of reading materials, such as hard copy and electronic copy books, has an influence on students' reading habits. Students find it difficult to read from a soft form because it causes vision problems, exhaustion, and other issues.
- Students' do not have time to read books instead of academic course books.
- The title of the book, the quality of the print, and the format and style of the writing all has an influence on the reading habit.
- The teacher does not recommend reading books; instead, they concentrate on academic activities that are required for

the completion of course tasks and exam preparation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Parents did not motivate their children to read at home and do not have extra books for reading instead of textbooks; therefore it is recommended that parents may encourage their children to read at home by providing a reading environment. Parents may provide their children books and instruct them about what kind of content is best for them.
- Most of the time Teachers concentrate on covering the academic content in their course. Other than academic books, they do not add any other books to the students. During class, teachers can introduce different authors and book titles in order to encourage students to develop a reading habit. The school authorities can schedule a library period for students.
- Libraries in educational institutes have not been adequately revised and updated to motivate students to read. Libraries may be updated and functional by the administration based on the needs and interest of students. The administration may conduct a pre-survey for library updated books to learn about students' needs and interests in reading. The university's libraries could be strengthened by linking them to digital libraries from reputable organizations..
- Since their reading habits are hindered by a lack of a suitable home atmosphere, the school should develop a library timetable that enables students to visit the library for at least one and a half hours per day.

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