

# The Determination of Reading Habits among Students: A Concept

**Nur Azmin Rosli, Nurul Fadhilah Razali, Zurin Umaira Ahmad Zamil,  
Siti Nur Farhanah Mohd Noor and Mohammad Fazli Baharuddin**

Faculty of Information Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, UiTM Selangor, Malaysia

DOI: 10.6007/IJARBSS/v7-i12/3710 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v7-i12/3710>

## **Abstract**

Reading habits are calculated as how much a person read, how often do they read, when do they read and what do they read. Reading can be summarized as a habit that involves books, printed articles and electronic materials. It varies differently of how each material can affect their reading habits. This paper aims to look in depth and compare the reading materials of secondary and tertiary school students in a few countries including Malaysia, United States of America, India, Vietnam, Sri Lanka and Nigeria. Their preference in terms of the types of books they read will differ throughout the whole article. While approaching the reading materials that they are interested in, the authors look deeply in their reading attitudes and the students' environment on how they perceive reading. The reading habit gives a possibility to determine the relationship between their reading attitudes and how the surroundings might affect them especially in school and universities. In order to find out the students' reading habits, it is essential to understand their attitudes towards reading, the environment and the reading materials that they prefer.

**Keywords:** Reading Habits, Reading Culture, Reading Attitudes

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Reading is an essential tool for learning exchange and the habit of reading in a person is an academic activity that builds abilities in reading methodologies. Through reading, information can be obtained through reading printed and non-printed type of materials. For instance, books, magazines, electronic journals etc. Walia & Sinha (2014) assert that reading is regarded as a process, a mode of thinking and a kind of real experience, and it involves many complex skills: the ability to perceive printed words, to skim for information and then perhaps to read intensively. According to Kutay (2014), reading improves the thinking ability by giving new concepts and ideas and enhances vocabulary and language which is essential in verbal communication. Meanwhile, reading and academic achievement are essential for research workers and educationists to know that every child whether he or she is gifted, average, normal or backward etc, should be educated in his or her own way but if he or she possesses good study habits, he or she can perform well in academics and in every situation (Owusu-Acheaw & Larson, 2014). To fulfill numerous types of knowledge process, it is crucial to start reading at an early age to seek knowledge more effectually. Wan Dollah et al. (2017) specified that reading

habits play important role in enhancing students' academic performance in schools. In order to achieve successful academic performance among students, parents must give more attention to monitor their children's education progress at home. It is the reading habits that helped students in getting meaningful and desirable knowledge. Reading habits are what it needs to create a literate society. Owusu-Acheaw & Larson (2014) study found that reading habits determine the academic achievements of students to a great extent. Both reading and academic achievements are interrelated and dependent on each other. Students often come from different environments and localities with different levels of academic achievement. Therefore, they differ in the pattern of reading habits.

To make it simple, reading habits are calculated as how much a person read, how often do they read, when do they read and what do they read. Are students still reading books up until today? Or the reading habits among students have been on the decline? Reading can be summarized as a habit that involves books, printed articles and electronic materials. It varies differently of how each material can affect their reading habits. Since reading can be universal, reviewing blogs, looking at news online can also be seen as reading so as long as there is a written paragraph on sight. This paper aims to look in depth and compare the reading materials of secondary and tertiary school students in a few countries including Malaysia, United States of America, India, Vietnam, Sri Lanka and Nigeria. Their preference in terms of the types of books they read will differ throughout the whole article. While approaching the reading materials that they are interested in, the authors look deeply in their reading attitudes and the students' environment on how they perceive reading. The reading habit gives a possibility to determine the relationship between their reading attitudes and how the surroundings might affect them especially in school and universities. In order to find out the students' reading habits, it is essential to understand their attitudes towards reading, the environment and the reading materials that they prefer.

## **2. READING MATERIALS ANALYSIS**

The phrase above explains on the beauty of reading and how it affects the life of readers. Reading is as important as reading materials are as reading materials ignite the spark of reading in a person. Reading materials play a significant role in maintaining reading interest in a person. In other words, when a person has found the book he loves, he would look forward to reading it. This encourages him to read more. The same goes for students especially in various education level. The reading materials available in the library drive the students to read and explore more on the world of reading.

Based on a research done by Owusu-Acheaw (2014), the reading habits of students of Koforidua Polytechnic in Nebraska, 62% out of 1000 students choose to read lecture notes when they visit the library. Unlike the 62% of the students, 25% of them prefer to read textbooks in the library. As for the other 3% and 10%, they are more likely to read novels and other materials available in the library. From the statistics above, it is clearly stated that majority of the students prefer academic reading materials notes especially when they are in

the library. This is one of the reasons why they have a high level of academic performance. They prefer to spend their leisure time by focusing and improving on their academics.

Otherwise, the Turkish High School students in London also have their own preferences when it comes to choosing reading materials. As for this one, it includes other different regions in London. The reading materials preferred are the ones outside of school. 89.7% of the students prefer to read novels while 70.2% prefer magazines as their reading material. Then, 66.5% of the students like to read materials on websites. The rest prefer other materials (Kutay, 2014). According to the statistics above, fictions are highly preferred by students especially teenagers because fictions are non-academic books and are usually more fun to read as compared to non-fictions. This is common among teenagers because the contents of fictions are usually more relate to them.

As for the students in Vietnam, they prefer the traditional reading materials which are printed books. There are about 59.6% of them who prefer to read fictions. It is undeniable that the contents of the fictions are found to be more interesting as compared to non-fictions. According to the pie chart, smartphones and computers were reading platforms that they use (Khoi, 2016). There are students who prefer online reading materials so that reading can be done anywhere and at any time. E-books applications, especially, have made it easier for them in terms lowering cost, consuming less energy and time. Free e-books applications can be installed on Appstore or Google Play Store. Free applications are one of the factors that encourage students to read.

In addition, the reading materials most Sri Lankan students prefer to read are relevant academic books. The response rate for such reading materials is 320. As for novels, the response rate is 158 which is half of the response rate of relevant academic books. Surprisingly, the response rate of newspapers is 195 (Kulatunga, 2016). This indicates that Sri Lankan students prefer to read newspapers more than novels. One of the possible reasons why the response rates stated above are as such is because these students would want to gain knowledge by reading academic materials. Non-academic materials also help in improving the students' grades. However, they highly prefer reading materials which are related to academic.

Malaysian students have their own preferences as well when it comes to reading materials. According to Dollah et al. (2017), 44.8% of the students prefer online reading materials. In this technological era, reading materials can be obtained easily from the Internet. Besides, 20% of them would choose magazines over other reading materials. Magazines are usually easier to read as the contents of the magazines are little. Magazines are usually read during leisure time. The other 18.1% and 17.1% prefer newspapers and books. As traditional and conventional printed materials may be, some students get more satisfaction by reading them.

Hence, students of different countries have different preferences. Some choose academic materials as their preferred materials while others prefer something else. One of the

importance of reading materials is they help to sustain or maintain the readers' interest when it comes to reading. This is why institutions should plan on effective strategies to encourage students to read.

### **3. STUDENT'S ATTITUDES TOWARDS READING**

Attitudes toward reading are defined as an individual's feeling about reading. It causes learners to adopt or avoid a reading situation. Attitude and interest toward reading can be related to feeling and their willingness to read. A person's reading attitude is characterized as a system of feelings related to reading which makes the student approach or maintain a strategic distance from a situation that involves reading.

Reading is generally accepted as a way of acquiring new information and new knowledge. We began by first reviewing the articles that need to be compared, between Malaysia and Vietnam readers. The first, a student's attitude is based on enjoyment in reading. Essentially, most countries have a reaction of enjoyment while reading. Based on Husaini et al. (2012), findings shown that 63% agreed that they enjoy reading. However, there were students (8%) who disagreed about enjoying reading. The findings also showed that the highest percentages (42%) of the respondents agreed that they read daily or almost every day. According to Khoi (2016), however, the country's level of enjoyment in reading, (33%) of the respondents claimed that they enjoy the activity very much, followed by (29%) of those that found reading enjoyable, (20%) share a fair relationship with it. Only a small amount of participants show little (10%) or no interest (6%) in reading at all. From these comparison, we can conclude that Malaysia is more interested in reading generally although it was unclear of what kind of things they prefer reading.

Based on Kutay (2014), the study shows that students of both genders had positive attitudes into reading, but female subjects had more positive attitudes towards reading than male subjects. For example, although the students from both genders agree strongly that "reading is a skill for life" and "reading is important", females were more likely to strongly agree with these two statements. In addition, the students as a whole agreed that they enjoyed visiting libraries. However, their library habits did not support the current findings, which concluded that the majority of participants visited a library at most once or twice a month.

According to Daniel et al. (2017) stated that majority of students in Nigeria only read when the need arises. The other reason why Nigerian students read is because the library is interesting, they are interested in lecture notes, and when there are electronic reading materials available. Studies found by Kulatunga (2016) shows that similarly majority of students in Sri Lanka only read when they need to keep up to date with their education background. Another reason why students in Sri Lanka read is to pass their examination, they also read because it is their hobby. Furthermore, to gain information, is one of the attitudes students in Sri Lanka possess.

Based on Baharuddin et al. (2015), findings revealed that the majority of the students read 10 to 20 pages of text per week. Besides, they also spend time for reading between 30 minutes to an hour and 30 minutes. Gender-difference also plays a role in reading habits because the study found that female students spent more time in reading and they also read more books than male students. Socio economic status also contributed to the encouragement of reading. Most of the high socio-economic status students tend to spend more time reading many books and have a positive attitude towards reading. Furthermore, high academic achievement students spend more time in reading rather than their lower academic counterparts. Surprisingly, the researcher also found that students who are active in curricular activities read many books.

A study done by Khoi (2016) showed that the students were also asked to rate the level of satisfaction with their reading time. Most of the respondents prove that they are whether feeling fine (33%) or satisfied (nearly 31%) with their current reading time. On the other hand, 17 percent of them claimed to be extremely satisfied with their time and the rest of 20% only feel slightly of the satisfaction or nothing at all. Concerning the large period of time students spend on reading, it may be justifiable for them to feel satisfied with their achievements. Moreover, the fact that almost one-third of the answers feel okay with the reading time may imply the young readers' ambition to strive for more.

Based on Cheema (2014), similarly majority of student in United States only read when they chat online. The other reason why student read in US is just they want to read their emails and reading online news. Other than that, students' purpose of reading is because they want to use online dictionary or encyclopaedia, search online information about a specific topic as well as taking part in an online group discussion. Last but not least, its purpose is to search for practical information online such as schedules, events, tips and recipes.

#### **4. STUDENTS' ENVIRONMENT INFLUENCES**

The countries that have specifically been mentioned in these articles allow us to conclude that the secondary school students' age varies in different countries. Starting off with parents' influence in students' reading habits, it is an undeniable fact that parents' influence is the strongest among the rest as students are usually the closest with their parents. However, how effective is their role to encourage reading habits is the real question. Kutay (2014); Clark and Hawkins (2010) found that most of the participants (17,089 students in England) stated that they received at least some encouragement to read from their mothers.

In Malaysia, a study done by Dollah et al. (2017), found that 42.9% (students) agreed that parent had allocated reading material for learning purpose. From these two researches, it shows that parents actually put an effort in instilling reading habits in their children. However, the average Malaysia read only two books per year. Based on Kutay (2014), If it is being compared to elementary school teachers in Turkey, 64.1% of participants read 6-20 books per year (Arıcan & Yılmaz, 2010). This shows the major difference in the number of books read per year.

The second aspect that plays a vital role in encouraging reading habits in secondary school students is teachers or teacher librarians. Previous research affirms also that a conscious effort should be made by all stakeholders in the educational system to promote the reading habit. In Nigeria, the participants (72.7%) indicates that using book talks, story hours and exhibition has helped in promoting reading culture. However, there are challenges that come with it. The challenges are internet syndrome, home video syndrome, phone addiction, non-integration of storytelling into the school curriculum as well as high costs of children's literature. In Malaysia, there is a program names NILAM that was intended to inhibit reading habits in students in Malaysia. From a survey done by Husaini et al. (2012), it was found that 70% of the respondents were aware of NILAM program conducted by the school resource center.

The third factor that affects reading habits is peers' influence. A study conducted by Kutay (2014), stated that 29.2% of students got recommendations for books to read from friends, which has bigger percentage than teachers. This shows that peer's influence is quite strong when it comes to reading. However, there is a stereotype that has been proved in a few researches which is reading habits being related to a feminine act. According to Kutay (2014), 41% of the students agreed that girls read more than boys. Another study done by Husaini et al. (2012); Arnasalam (1994) stated that the study found that female students spent more time in reading and they also read more books than male students. Male students do not read as much as female due to the reading habits' relating to being more feminine which makes them reluctant to read. Secondary school students are usually in their process of finding themselves, therefore, having this understanding in their circle of friends is not a good influence.

There are several suggestions brought up by different researches to improve this. The example of efforts that can be made by parents are by providing appropriate reading material, controlling television viewing and assist the children in their routine to balance the time. It is proven that there have been efforts made by teacher librarians to inculcate reading habits. As suggested by Baharuddin et al.(2015), students can be motivated to read through storytelling, reading together, formation of reading clubs as well as provision of conducive reading environment devoid of unwarranted noise and distractions. The school library needs to provide an extensive training for students with an orientation that starts from tours, training session as well as information skills lecture for students (Dollah, 2017). The school can also consider providing more nicely decorated reading corners at all gazebo located around the school (Husaini et al., 2012). As from peers' point of view, students should avoid relying on stereotypes as it would not have done much good. Everyone is encouraged to read regardless of their gender.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The statistics of reading can be a little biased because not everyone sees reading the same. Some might think they do read every day, but in reality, all they have been reading through are posts from Facebook or other social medias. It is merely and unfairly matter to really estimate

how coefficient does these students read and how do they react towards reading. The environment can affect them in a way of how they are taught to read. We are surrounded by people in this world, and attitudes can be learnt by just looking and feeling interested about it. A child should be taught how to read at a young age because at the early stages of life is a pinnacle point in developing habits. If instilled at such an early age and nurtured properly as the child grows, they are more likely to retain and further improve their habit of reading. It is proven from one of the articles that reading habits improves students' academic performance. Perhaps, if they lack in reading habits in their daily life, they might not excel in their academic performance and might not get good grades in school. In conclusion, reading is an essential part of everyday life. Without reading, information and knowledge from long ago would not have been passed on accurately as it is today. Civilizations developed on the knowledge passed down from generations all through the simple act of reading. As such it is important for our generation and the coming generations to maintain an eager mind and thirst for knowledge; for it cannot be attained without reading. Those around us may influence us on the reading materials we choose but that should not stop us from pursuing whatever forms of knowledge available to us. We all read, regardless if notice it or not, but the amount of time we put into reading, the topics we choose to read about, where we choose to read them, even who we choose to read with; that is what influences our interest in reading. Reading is a matter of when conditions are met; when both body and mind are in harmony in conducting the task, it becomes easier for them.

## References

- Arıcan, S., & Yılmaz, B., 2010. 100 Temel Eser Uygulamasının Öğrencilerin Okuma Alışkanlıklarına Etkisi ve Bu Uygulamada Kütüphanelerin Rolü Konusunda Öğretmen Görüşleri (Teachers' Views on the Effect of 100 Essential Books Application on Reading Habits of the Students and the Role of Libraries). *Türk Kutuphaneciliği (Turkish Librarianship)*, 24(3), 495-518.
- Arnasalam, A. (1994). Minat membaca dan kaitannya dengan pencapaian akademik dan penyertaan dalam kegiatan kokurikulum. Master Thesis. Faculty of Education Studies, University Malaya.
- Baharuddin, M. F., Wan Hasnol, W. M. H., Mohd Ramsi, M. F. & Abdul Kadir, M. R. (2015). *Understanding of reading habits among students in Malaysia: a review. Proceedings of the 25th international business information management association conference (ibima 25th)*. Amsterdam, Netherland.
- Cheema, J. R. (2013, November 30). *Prevalence of online reading among high school students in qatar: evidence from the programme for international student assessment 2009*. Retrieved October 28, 2017, from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1071195>

- Clark, C., & Hawkins, L., 2010. Young People's Reading: The Importance of home environment and family support: More findings our national survey. London: National Literacy Trust.
- Daniel, O. C., Esoname, S. R., Chima, O. D., & Udoaku, O. S. (2017). *Effect of reading habits on the academic performance of students: a case study of the students of Afe Babalola university, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti state*. American Journal of Library and Information Science, 1(1), 27-33. doi:10.11648/j.ajlis.20170101.1.
- Husaini, H., Hashim, D. M, Abdul Aziz, R., Baharuddin, M. F. & Mohd Saad, M. S. (2012). [The roles of school resource center in nurturing reading habits and attitudes among secondary school students](#). Proceeding of 15<sup>th</sup> consal. Bali, Indonesia.
- Khoi. (2016). *A survey into reading habits among vietnamese university*. Retrieved October 28, 2017, from [www.academia.edu/2f30602521%2fA\\_SURVEY\\_INTO\\_READING\\_HABITS\\_AMONG\\_VIETNAMESE\\_UNIVERSITY\\_STUDENTS&p=DevEx,5034.1](http://www.academia.edu/2f30602521%2fA_SURVEY_INTO_READING_HABITS_AMONG_VIETNAMESE_UNIVERSITY_STUDENTS&p=DevEx,5034.1)
- Kulatunga, R. K. (2016). *A study on understanding the reading habits and library usage of under graduate students (2007/2008 batch) of Uva Wellassa university of Sri Lanka*. Retrieved October 28, 2017, from <http://irjms.in/sites/irjms/index.php/files/article/view/79>
- Kutay, V. (2014). *A survey of the reading habits of Turkish high school students and an examination of the efforts to encourage them to read (unpublished master's thesis)*. Loughborough University.
- Owusu-Acheaw, M., & Larson, A. G. (2014). *Reading habits among students and its effect on academic performance: a study of students of Koforidua polytechnic*. Library Philosophy and Practice, 0\_1.
- Walia, P. K. & Sinha, N., (2014) "*Changing trend in reading habits of teenagers in Delhi: An impact assessment of demographic and environmental variables*", *Library Review*, Vol. 63 Issue: 1/2, pp.125-137. <https://doi.org/10.1108/LR-03-2013-0038>
- Dollah, W. A. K. W., Fakeh, S. S. K.W , Kamal Rafedzi, E. R., Ibrahim, A., Rahim, H., Masron, M. Z. A & Ibrahim, M. R. (2017). *Inculcating reading habits among secondary school students*, *journal of scientific and engineering research, jsaer* , pageno : 407, vol : 4, issues : 8