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Reading Habits Among Undergraduate Students of NED University of Engineering and Technology, Karachi, Pakistan: A Pilot Study

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Abstract:

Reading is an art that tends to expose ourselves to knowledge of the worlds. To put it another way, it is an art of decoding message through written words.

This study is based on under graduates' students' experience on reading preferences regarding print or paperback books. The scope of this research focuses on holistic view on trends of reading paperback books and did not aims to confer any particular aspect or impact of reading books on respondents. However, the findings have shown that paperback books still are of great importance and significant driving force when it comes to reading for pleasure and/or academic purposes among university students.

Keywords: Reading, Reading Habits, undergraduate Student, Book Reading

INTRODUCTION

Proverb saying 'reading is the warehouse of knowledge' is the matchless truth known to mankind. Reading is an art that tends to expose ourselves to knowledge of the worlds. To put it another way, it is an art of decoding message through written words. Reading brings knowledge and knowledge brings power therefore, reading is power. It emanates power to know, to learn, to think and to understand. Collins and Cheek (1999) describe reading as a process that requires the use of complex thought processes to interpret printed symbols as meaningful units and comprehend them as a thought unit in order to understand a printed message. Simply put, it is an art of decoding message through written words.

In today's world the importance of reading has increased with an inevitable demand of more to know and to learn. In this case serious reading or reading prone to research acts as a catalyst to fulfill this ever-growing demand. Also this kind of reading is the only complex intellectual process which is realized by combining many functions like seeing, perceiving, vocalizing, comprehending and constructing in the brain (Balci, 2009; Bamberger, 1990). It appears to be a dynamic process that involves its readers actively to enhance their insights and level of information. Besides information, reading has in all times been a source of entertainment and pleasure as well. No entertainment is so cheap or any pleasures so lasting than reading (Montagu).

A habit is a routine of behavior that is repeated regularly and tends to occur unconsciously. At first man make habits and then eventually those habits makes a man (Dryden). In other words, habits whether good or bad when practiced over a period of time, they tend to make us either into a humble and sensible being or breaks us to a point of ignorance and annihilation. When it comes to reading, which is the basic manner of acquiring information, is transformed into a habit, another notion called “reading habit” comes into being.

Reading habit can be considered as one of the most influentially noble amongst all human habits because it directly or indirectly incorporates change in ways of human thinking and behavior. Reading habit refers to the behavior, which expresses the likeness of reading and tastes of reading (Sangkaeo, 1999). It is a way of how the reader organizes his or her reading. Generally, reading and reading habits are used to describe different attributes of the readers. If reading is an intellectual activity that involves understanding and processing of information, then on the other side, reading habit is regarded as a psychological attribute of one’s personality (Sharma and Singh, 2005).

Reading is a mechanism for acquiring extensive and in-depth information through different means like newspapers, television, internet etc., but most significantly through ‘books’. A book worthy of reading not only communicates knowledge but wisdoms of all kind. Nothing can add to one’s intellect more than reading a book. The more you read books, the more exposed you are towards your attitudes, ideas and imagination.

In a student’s life reading from electronic devices such as e-book readers, tablets, computers and smartphones have undoubtedly become widespread still the traditional reading patterns such as reading from paperback books plays a significant role in acquiring information to fulfill both academic and leisure reasons. In modern age, where education and lifelong learning have become a must for professional and career development, the university students are expected to have extensive reading habits and sound relationship with books. Besides career orientation, reading books in leisure hours is a great source of de-stressing daily burden of making assignments, taking classes and notes etc. for university students.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Previous studies on reading habits revealed a number of findings. Sheorey and Mokhtari (1994) indicate that there is no significant difference between high and low-proficient readers with regard to amount of time spent reading academic or non-academic materials. Scales and Rhee (2001) consider reading habits as how frequently, how much and what printed texts the participants read.

It is the reading habits which help the learner in obtaining meaningful and desirable knowledge. Good reading habits act as a strong weapon for the students to excel in life (Bashir & Mattoo, 2012). University students are groups that are expected to have a high level of reading habit, which is among the individual and social development criteria. Thus, the determination of reading habits of university students is considered important both in academic and in their self-development throughout their lives. (Erdem, 2015).

A study conducted by Nor Shahriza and Amelia (2007) focused on the gender and choice of reading material revealed that university students spend a significant amount of time reading newspapers, academic books and websites.

A study by Shen (2006) in Taiwan indicated that the reasons for leisure reading were for entertainment and acquiring information. Over 70% of undergraduate students preferred to read magazines and newspapers to novels with half of them reading the sports and entertainment news regularly.

Saira Soroya and Kanwal Ameen (2016) discussed that although students in Pakistan owned electronic devices and reported to be familiar with functions and techniques associated with onscreen reading material but they prefer to read in print format yet in practice they were using digital material more frequently.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this pilot study is to determine reading habits trends among undergraduate students at NED University of Engineering and Technology. The study encircles the students' preferable format for reading i.e., print or electronic, their choice of time, place and duration for reading paperbacks, favorite genres and language for reading books, the frequency of reading books from every day to yearly basis and most importantly the goals and objectives they think they achieve the **most** by reading paperback books.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This pilot study is based on quantitative research using a survey method. In this connection, a close-ended questionnaire was constructed with the help of supervisor and corresponding researcher. Convenience sampling technique was used for data collection. The participants of the study are undergraduate students studying in different engineering and non-engineering departments at NED University of Engineering and Technology. Total 50 students responded to the questionnaire including both genders, out of which 28 (56%) were male and 22 (44%) were female respondents.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Under this section personal details of students and their responses to the questionnaire has been analyzed and interpreted in the form of tables presented below.

Table 1 Students who read and does not read books

	Total <i>n</i> (%)
Read books	40 (80)
Do not read books	10 (20)

In **Table 1**, a higher turnout of 40 (80%) out of total 50 (100%) participants shows that majority of undergraduate students read books and only 10 (20%) of respondents were not interested in reading books.

Table 2 Preferable format (print or electronic) for reading books

	Total <i>n</i> (%)
Print/paperback books	21 (52.5)
Electronic/e-books	19 (47.5)

Table 2 illustrates that 21 (52.5%) out of 40 (80%) responded in favor of print or paperback formats and 19 (47.5%) said that they prefer reading e-books.

Table 3 Preferable language for reading print/paperback books

	Total <i>n</i> (%)
English	15 (71.4)
Urdu	6 (28.5)
Other	0

Table 3 shows the trends among undergraduate students regarding language for reading printed books. The result shows that out of 21 (52.5%) students, 15 (71.4%) said that they prefer to read books in English language while 6 (28.5%) opted for Urdu language. None responded for other languages.

Table 4 Amount of time spent for reading print/paperback books in a day

	Total <i>n</i> (%)
Less than hour	3 (14.2)
An hour or two	8 (38.0)
More than two hours	10 (47.6)

In **Table 4** the results elaborates that most of the undergraduates spend more than two hours on reading books 10 (47.6%), while 8 (38.0%) spends an hour or two and only 3 (14.2%) responded to have spent less than an hour on reading books.

Table 5 Places to read print/paperback books

	Total <i>n</i> (%)
At library	6 (28.5)

At home	10 (47.6)
During commotion/travel	5 (23.8)

The results of **Table 5** reveals that 6 (28.5%) respondents prefer to read at library while majority prefer to read books at home 10 (47.6%) and 5 (23.8%) read during travel and/or commotion.

Table 6 Reason for reading print/paperback books

	Total <i>n</i> (%)
For academic reasons	7 (33.3)
To increase vocabulary	4 (19.0)
For entertainment	3 (14.2)
To keep informative	7 (33.3)

Table 6 includes the analysis on reasons for reading paperbacks and results shows that similar trends can be observed amongst students regarding reading for academic purpose and to keep informative i.e., 7 (33.3%). While, 4 (19.0%) said that they read to increase vocabulary and 3 (14.3%) read for entertainment purposes only.

Table 7 Means of getting books for reading

	Total <i>n</i> (%)
Buying own copy	9 (42.8)
Borrow from library	6 (28.5)
Borrow from a Friend	4 (19.0)
As a gift	2 (9.5)

The trends in **Table 7** illustrates the means of getting books for reading. The results reveals that majority of participants 9 (42.8%) likes to own a personal copy of book while 6 (28.5%) likes to read books borrowed from a library. Moreover, 4 (19.0%) read by borrowing books from their friends and only 2 (9.5%) read books when it's gifted to them.

Table 8 Frequency of reading books

	Total <i>n</i> (%)
On everyday basis	5 (23.8)
A few times a week	8 (38.0)
A few times a month	3 (14.2)
Once or twice a year	2 (9.5)
Less than once a year	3 (14.2)

As shown in **Table 8** the analysis on frequency of reading books reveals that 5 (23.8%) read on everyday basis. Majority students i.e., 8 (38.0%) read few times a week while 3 (14.2%) reads few times a month. Furthermore, 3 (14.2%) said that they read less than once a year and only 2 (9.5%) said that they read once or twice a year.

Table 9 Number of books read last year

	Total <i>n</i> (%)
1-5	12 (57.1)
6-10	7 (33.3)
More than 10	2 (9.5)

The results that has been observed in **Table 9** among students regarding number of books they have read in a year shows that majority 12 (57.1%) have read 1 to 5 number of books last year. On the hand 7 (33.3%) have read 6 to 10 books while only 2 (9.5%) have read more than 10 books last year.

Table 10 Favorite genre for reading books

	Total <i>n</i> (%)
Self-help	7 (33.3%)

Biography	5 (23.8)
Fiction	5 (23.8)
Politics	0
Text-books	4 (19.0)

Table 10 shows the interesting results about the favorite genre of books among undergraduates. The results shows that 7(33.3%) students like to read self-help books, 5(23.8%) likes reading biographies, same result for fiction 5(23.8%) and 4(19.0%) likes to read their text-books. There was no response recorded for political books.

Table 11 Impact of reading books students

	Total <i>n</i> (%)
Increase in vocabulary	4 (19.0)
Gain insights on a specific topic	6 (28.5)
Feel relax	5 (23.8)
Increase in creative thinking	6 (28.5)
Increase in problem-solving ability	0

Table 11 shows the results about impact that readers feel the most reading books. 4(19%) students said their vocabulary has improved while 6 (28.5%) said they have gained insights on their topics of interest. 5(23.8%) said they feel relaxed after reading books and 6 (28.5%) said their creativity is improved. No one responded for last option.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the study reveals that majority of participants prefer to read books 40 (80%). The preferable format for reading is print or paperback books 21 (52.5%). Mostly undergraduate students at NED University prefer to read in English 15 (71.4%) over other languages. Higher number of students 10 (47.6%) spends more than two hours on reading books. Majority students 10 (47.6%) preferably likes to read at home instead of public spaces.

The two reasons of reading books primarily among students is to keep informative 7 (33.3%) and academically ahead 7 (33.3%). Most of the students 9 (42.8%) prefer to buy their own copy of books rather than borrowing them. Higher number 8 (38%) of students likes to read paperbacks few times week rather than everyday basis. Significant numbers of students i.e., 12 (57.1%) read not more than 1-5 books per year.

When it comes to the favorite genre, the students notably like to read self-help books 7 (33.3%) over other types. The majority of respondents opted for two options on the impact that they

feel the most by reading books. 6 (28.5%) said book reading helped them to attain insights on a particular topic as well as another 6 (28.5%) said it helps in improving their creative abilities.

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