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Reading Habits of Blinds and Visually Impaired Students of University of Karachi.

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Abstract

This Paper is an attempt to ascertain the reading habit among VI students in different departments of University of Karachi. It is not only useful for the provision of information resources to the VI students but also for acquiring facilities for VI students. For collecting necessary data Research guide designed and interviews were conducted with VI students. Qualitative approach is used for the analysis of data. It can be concluded that reading is popular habits among VI students. They are not only read fiction book but also current affairs, Entrance Examination and Competitive examination books. Students give preference to those books which are directly or indirectly related to the subject in which they study. They preferred Urdu language for reading but they read in different languages such as English and Arabic. They use braille for reading but some of them are not having knowledge of braille. They face different problems while reading such as unavailability of books and their translations. Deficiency of audio books and unavailability of helper in library. The technologies help them to overcome the problems in reading.

Key words

Reading, Habit, Blinds, VI Students, University of Karachi.

Introduction

Reading is a fundamental and basic necessity of every person. It helps in learning and developing in academic life of students. Nobody can deny the importance of reading in everyday of life. The more students read the more vocabulary increase. Children spend lot of time in reading they easily focused on their studies as well as in extra co-curricular activities. Children who starts

reading regularly from early age are easily enjoy reading in later life. This will be very helpful to them and makes ease in their education.

Almighty Allah Tabarak WaTa'ala creates the whole universe in which human beings, plants, animals and other non living things are present. Allah is the only one creator. He calls the human being as the noblest of all creatures; man has been made superior to a vast number of creations.

It is stated in Surah Bani Israel thus:

“We have honoured the children of Adam, provided them with transport on land & sea, give them for sustenance things good & pure, & made them superior to a great number of our creations.”

All the human beings are superior from other creations due to their knowledge. Knowledge is the weapons which differentiate them from others. The power of knowledge not be increase without reading. Reading plays an important role in their lives. Reading habit is a habit which gives satisfaction to humans. Different people read different types of literature for different purpose. Some people read for pleasure, some to fulfill their academic & recreational needs.

Encyclopedia Britannica (1998) defines reading as:

“Reading is a mental process of securing & reacting to author’s message represented by written or printed words.”

New Chambers Dictionary 20th century defines the meaning of habit as:

“Habit is an ordinary course of behavior or tendency to perform certain action.”

Types of Reading

Basically there are two types of reading.

1. Extensive reading

Reading for pleasure on any topic of interest is called extensive reading. The main purpose of this reading is to relax or enjoy you. Comics, humorous stories, tales novels, short articles in the newspapers & magazines, jokes & other are included in extensive reading.

2. Intensive Reading

Careful and in depth reading is called intensive reading. In this reading reader read for details & extract specific information on particular topics. This kind of reading is usually done in during study, preparation of exams etc.

Blinds & VI persons are also considered as an equal part of our society. They also read for different purposes.

The US Centre for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) defines Visual Impairment as the condition when “A person’s eyesight cannot be corrected to a normal level.”

Categories of visual impairment

Category - Corrected		WHO Definition		Indian
	VA-better eye	Standard*	Working	Definition
0	6/6-6/18	Normal	Normal	Normal
1	<6/18-6/60	Visual Impairment	Low Vision	Low Vision
2	<6/60-3/60	Severe Visual Impairment	Low Vision	Blind
3	<3/60-1/60	Blind	Low Vision	Blind
4	<1/60-PL	Blind	Low Vision	Blind
5	NPL	Blind	Total Blindness	Total Blindness

Blindness refers to a condition where a person suffers from any of the following conditions, namely:

- Total absence of sight; or
- Visual acuity not exceeding 6/60 or 20/200 (Snellen) in the better eye even with correction lenses; or
- Limitation of the field of vision subtending an angle of 20 degree or worse.

Low Vision

“Person with low vision” means a person with impairment of visual functioning even after treatment or standard refractive correction but who uses or is potentially capable of using vision for the planning or execution of a task with appropriate assistive device”.

“Low vision are those who suffer visual acuity between 20/200 to 70/200 (Snellen) or 6/18 to 6/60 in the better eye after the best possible correction or a Field of Vision between 20 to 30 degrees”.

University

Definition

According to Merriam Webster:

“An institute of higher learning providing facilities for teaching & research & authorized to grant academic degrees

Specifically: one made up of an undergraduate division which confers bachelors' degree & a graduate division which comprises a graduate school & professional school each of which may confer masters' degree & doctorates.

University of Karachi

University of Karachi is a public sector university established in 1951. It prepares thousands of researchers on yearly basis. It is included in one of the best & big universities of Pakistan.

VI students of University of Karachi

University of Karachi also offers admission to blinds & VI students to continue their educational process. Blinds & VI students take admission on merit base. These students must have submitted their documents along with their blind certificate. VI students mostly present in the faculty of Arts & Social Science departments. They record the lectures during class & then prepare themselves for semester exams. They also arrange their writers for written exams.

Literature Review

A study conducted by Kain (2016) shows that the study habit may vary from student to students. Sighted students easily attracted to different colourful things but visually impaired students has less stimulation due to their lack of vision, so they try to use another senses more and more to concentrate on their studies.

Radojichikj (2015) compare reading performance between students who are using braille and those who are using enlarge print to read. Study reveals that Braille reader students read at lower reading rate compared to print reader students with visual impairment,

Chauhan and Lal (2012) investigate the impact of information technology on reading habits. The result shows that students read news, e-mails, sales information, movie review, fashion news, newspapers and magazines through the internet.

The study of Adetoro (2010) shows that Nigerian VI people had high reading interest, they are very fond of reading on religious, business & entertainment topics. They need talking books, audio recordings to satisfy their needs.

Minda (2007) explore in his study that there is a need to develop basic guidelines and authentic standards that are informed by the evidence for low vision readers.

A study by Shen (2006) indicated that Over 70% of undergraduate students preferred reading just for entertainment, they read magazines, newspapers and novels. Half of them reading the sports and entertainment news regularly.

Rayles (1991) conducted research on those persons who read from Braille or print as their original reading material. The study reveals that those who learn to read from Braille have high employment rate as well as in education. The person who read from print material are very few in number.

Research Question

What kind of literature used by VI students for reading & what problems they faced?

Limitation & Scope

The sample of the respondents was restricted to the VI students of bachelors & masters level, studying in the different departments of faculty of Arts & Social Science, University of Karachi.

Objectives of the study

- To explore reading habit of VI students.
- To highlight problems in reading.
- To explore the type of material they used.
- To know the basic objective or purpose of their reading.

Methodology

Qualitative research method is used to fulfill the objectives, 15 blinds students are selected from different departments of faculty of Arts & Social Science by Random Sampling. In the light of the literature review as well as in experts' opinion, to enhance the contents & face validity of the questionnaire (self structured interview guide) was prepared to conduct the interview. The data was collected through the interviews with VI students. All the questions are open ended in the interview guide. Interviews were recorded; important points were noted down & transcribed by the researcher herself. In the last data has been analyzed for the interpretation of those interviews.

Significance

The study is very much significance for the university students to judge the current level of reading & after the judgment the university can provide facilities to VI students to increase the level of their reading& also provide different types of material according to their needs which will be beneficial for them.

Data Analysis

Table no. 1

Population Category	Population Level	No. of Respondents
Qualification	BS	11
	MA	4
Age	21-25	7
	26-30	8
Gender	Male	9
	Female	6
Level of Blindness	Total Blind	8

	Partially Blind	7
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Table no. 1 shows that the data was collected through Random Sampling by 15 blind students in which 8 students are totally blinds & remaining 7 students are partially blinds. Due to the ethical consideration name of the participants replaced by the letter “P”.

Following are the evaluated data collected from the respondents.

1. Reading Habit

It is not necessary that reading habit is present & equal in all students. Due to this reason the question was ask to the respondent that, **“They read books or not?”**

All the participants reply in positive way such as...

P.2 said that:

“Yes! I am very fond of reading, I read books.”

2. Language/ medium of Reading

Question was asked to the participants was that **“Which language they prefer for reading books?”**Out of 15, 8 students prefer Urdu language, 2 students read books in Arabic & Urdu language, 2 in English & 3 students read books in Urdu as well as in English language.

According to P.3:

“English language is difficult for me to understand because I study basically from Urdu medium school & they were not properly focused on English language that’s why I only read books in Urdu language.”

P.15 said that:

“I read books in English language because I it is an international language, it is necessary for us to learn it & make ourselves as groom as possible.”

3. Timing of Reading

Different people read books in different timings, some like to read books in early morning, some in evening & some at night before going to sleep.

When a question **“In which part of day or night you read books”** asked from the students, we know from their answer that 2 students prefer early morning time for reading, 3 students in the sunsets time after Salat ul Maghreb. 4 students read at night before going to sleep. Whereas 6 students read books in any time of the day, they do not fix any time for reading.

P.15 said that:

“I daily read books after Salat ul Fajar & Salat ul Maghreb.”

P.11 said that:

“I only read books & learn my lesson in early morning, because in that time my mind is fresh & I pick all points quickly”

4. Purpose of Reading

Those persons who book lovers are read books only for their satisfaction but all people are not same & not understand this philosophy, some people read books to upgrade their knowledge, some to achieve good marks in exams & some to get better opportunities in their jobs.

When the similar question was asked to the students, we know that 3 out of 15 students read books to satisfy their information needs, 5 students read because they need to know the current affairs, 3 students read books to get better opportunities in future & remaining 4 students read books to get good marks in exams.

P.8 said that:

“I read books only for my satisfaction, when I don’t read books I am not feeling well; so reading is necessary for me”

P.10 said that:

“I am very interesting in reading current affairs because I am very social & I want to make myself updated person.”

P. 2 said that:

“Because we are students & marks are very important for us, so I read more & more books to get good marks in exams”

P. 11 said that:

“Practical application of knowledge is very important. It is possible when do job at somewhere, so I read books to earn knowledge and to get better opportunities in job.”

5. Topic of Reading

Every human being has different nature, & according to their nature they read different kinds of books, when a question asked to the students that **“What are their favourite topics for reading?”** All the students shows their reading interest according to their related departments where they study.

P.5 studies in the department of Mass Communication, he told that:

“I am very fond of reading, I usually read or listen current affairs & Talk shows to update & upgrade my knowledge.”

P.1 studies in the department of Criminology, he said that:

“Criminology is my favourite subject; I usually read those books which are directly related to crime or different types of cases related to crime.”

6.Favourite authors & books

A written word focuses the behavior & nature of writer & those words highly effects on readers.

P.2 related to the Urdu department, he said that:

“My favourite poet is Mirza Asad ullah Khan Ghalib & Ahmed Faraz. Diwan e Ghalib & Janan Janan is one of my favourite books. I also like Harold, Mc Grate, and Thomas & Hardy. I also like their books which are “A pair of blue eyes & Arms & the Women.”

P.7 study in Islamic Learning department she said that:

“I am very fond of Islamic Fiqah, so I read different problems in Fiqah related to Islam.”

7. Types of Material

Blinds & VI students do not read directly from printed books. They used different types of materials for reading.

P.3 said that:

“I use braille to read & learn.”

P.4 said that:

“I have an android mobile phone & Text to speech software is installed, which helps me to read downloaded material. This software read textual material & I can easily understand all words.”

P.13 said that:

“I usually read in Urdu language, that software’s cannot facilitate me to read Urdu language, so I read books with the help of my friends.”

8. Problems in Reading

Blinds & VI students of University of Karachi faced many problems in reading.

P.9 said that:

“Due to not availability of proper audio material in our University library, we concern internet to satisfy our information need, but no numerous collection is provided in Urdu language. This is the major problem for us.”

P.14 said that:

“Helpers are not available any time who read book for us,”

9. Impact of Reading

Reading is perhaps one of the best hobbies in the world, & one of the healthiest also. Reading increase brain power, enhance empathic skills & also heightness brain connectivity.

When a question asked to the students that **“Is reading habit has a positive impact on your personality?”**

All the participants answered in similar way such as

P.12 said that:

“Reading groom my personality, it makes me able to talk about any topic without hesitation. It makes me better human being as well as it increase my vocabulary.”

Findings

- Reading habit is most popular among the VI students.
- They read books in English and as well as in Arabic language but prefer reading in Urdu language.
- The basic objectives of their reading are to gain knowledge about their relevant subjects, get well informed about current affairs and entertainment.
- They generally read books on current affairs, novels, religious literature, safarnamy poetry etc.
- VI students use different types of devices for reading. The most popular devices they use are android mobile phones and laptops. The use JAWS, open book & text to speech software on their laptops & Google talkback on mobile phones.
- The VI students also read through Braille as well as with the help of other students.
- Blinds or VI students of UoK face different problems in reading. The audio books neither available for them in library nor library staff provide them audio recordings of the books.
- There is no training organization for VI students in which they get awareness about use of technology. There is no helper available in the library for them who help them in reading.

- According to VI student reading play an important role in their life. They get updated on their subjects who help them in getting better jobs, get more information about different topics which help them in discussion; they get confidence through reading & also increase their vocabulary.

Conclusion

VI students have strong reading habit. They read in Urdu English and Arabic language. But they need audio books or audio converted books to satisfy their information needs. They also demanded the translations of different English books into Urdu for better understanding of contents. They face problems in reading. They want helper in library who helps them in reading. They are well aware about the technologies used for reading in android mobile phones as well as in computers. But they want trainings which make them more groomed to use different technologies.

Recommendations

- Blinds & VI students need special attention, reading habit is present in their nature but need to polish it.
- Arrange trainings, workshops, seminars for VI students & teach them to use different types of technologies.
- Provide required material in their required language.
- Provide them audio converted books or audio books according to their needs.
- Library must provide a helper who helps them in reading if the above said facilities are not provided.
- Publishers & books sellers should make a policy to make audio books or audio converted books at the time of publication.
- Need to develop those software's which easily read Urdu text material so the reader who want to fulfill their information need in Urdu language can easily fulfill it.
- Mahmud Husain Library (Central Library of University of Karachi) is a huge building with various floors, blinds & VI students cannot move easily in different sections of this library, so university should provide easy access in the form of elevator or lift.
- Provide terminals with installed text to speech software's for easy reading for blinds & VI students.

- Shrafat Hussain Library which was a part of Dr. Kaleem Ur Rehman Libraray, English Department provided audio converted books for blinds & VI students, but this work was stopped due to some reasons. University of Karachi should pay attention towards them and start this work as soon as possible. It will be beneficial for students.

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