
An inquiry into Reading Habit of Bachelor Level Students: A Case Study of Mahendra Multiple Campus, Nepalgunj

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Abstract

This paper aims to investigate the reading habits and attitudes of students in the Faculty of Management, Mahendra Multiple Campus, Nepalgunj. The importance of reading as a means to intellectual and emotional growth is discussed, emphasizing the advantages that reading can bring. To collect the necessary data, a questionnaire was designed and distributed to 80 students, probing into their reading habits, preferences, and attitudes. Through quantitative analysis of the findings, it was revealed that the students held an overall positive attitude towards academic and leisure reading, reading either daily or at least once a week. Additionally, digital materials were preferred to printed texts due to their availability and convenience. Based on these results, recommendations were made to improve the reading habits and attitudes of students, including the necessity of a national survey on Nepali students' reading habits. Finally, the importance of teachers in motivating students to read was highlighted, as the study showed that they can significantly impact students' reading habits and attitudes.

Keywords: Reading Habits, Student Attitudes, Digital vs. Printed Texts, Teacher Influence

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Introduction

Reading plays a crucial role in an individual's intellectual and emotional growth, with individuals who possess strong reading abilities having greater opportunities for success and broader mental horizons. According to Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw, and Rycik (1999), the 21st century has seen adolescents entering the adult world needing higher levels of reading literacy to carry out their daily activities, including their jobs, households, and personal lives. However, recent years have seen technology advances and media consumption reduce the amount of time students spend reading books. Instead, students tend to spend more time browsing the internet or engaging in other technology-based activities (Annamalai & Muniandy, 2013; Florence, Adesola, Alaba & Adewumi, 2017). It is crucial for students to master reading skills as it can enhance progress in all other areas of learning (Ahmed, 2020) and be beneficial in the long term.

As future leaders, it is imperative for university students to improve their reading habits by leveraging technology. Furthermore, the education system should prepare students to adapt to social and technological changes that are taking place (Mohd Noor, 2011).

The primary objective of this paper is to provide exploratory insights into the reading habits and attitudes of students in the Faculty of Management, Mahendra Multiple Campus, Nepalgunj. By identifying the students' reading habits and attitudes, this paper aims to establish the correlation between reading habits, attitudes, and make recommendations to enhance students' reading habits in line with their preferences. Additionally, the paper recognizes that the accessibility of digital reading materials via the internet technology may affect students' reading habits. Hence, the following research questions align with the objectives of the paper:

What are the reading habits of students in the Faculty of Management, Mahendra Multiple Campus?

What are the factors influencing their reading habits?

What are the attitudes of the students towards reading?

How do these attitudes impact their reading habits?

Reading and Reading Habit

According to Smith and Robinson (1980), reading is an active process that involves decoding, analyzing, reasoning, thinking, imagining, and judging to understand the writer's message. Toit (2001) defined reading as a process of thinking, recalling, and relating ideas based on written words. Reading comprehension involves the reader's ability to capture information from the text and derive meaning from it (Adetunji, 2007).

Reading habit refers to an individual's preference for reading materials and taste in reading (Sangkaeo, 1999). A good reading habit is essential for healthy intellectual growth and the development of values that help readers understand rather than condemn (Mohd Noor,

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2011). Furthermore, a reading habit is crucial for practical efficiency and intellectual growth. Chettri and Rout (2013) indicated that the amount of reading materials and the intensity of one's desire to read determine one's interest in reading, which affects reading speed, fluency, vocabulary, general knowledge, and academic achievement.

Good reading habits have been found to enhance academic performance (Florence et al., 2017). Despite recognizing the importance of reading, students' reading habits do not reflect their understanding of its significance (Florence et al., 2017). Poor reading habits negatively impact academic performance (Anyaegbu, 2016). Lack of understanding in reading discourages students from studying outside the classroom, which affects academic performance (Anyaegbu, 2016). Espin and Deno (1993) established a relationship between basic reading literacy and academic success.

Developing Reading Habit

Inderjit (2014) posits that the growth of reading habits is not confined to the classroom or home environment but extends to the community or public space. McColvin (1929) identifies four factors that foster the development of children's reading habits. The first factor is the influence of parents and friends who enjoy reading. Essentially, anyone in the child's social circle can play a role in shaping their reading habits. Second, the availability of books at home or a well-stocked library in the community. Third, the influence of teachers, who must model good reading habits for their students. Fourth, the integration of library reading into school work. Teachers are responsible for creating a connection between school work and library reading to encourage the development of reading habits.

According to Anyaegbu (2016), the lack of a functional library can negatively impact students' reading habits. The respondents in his study reported that the absence of reading materials in their school library undermines their reading habits. Moreover, the lack of a well-equipped school library and a teacher librarian further impedes students' use of the library. The library is a crucial resource that stimulates and develops students' reading interests and plays a vital role in promoting reading.

Interestingly, in the digital age, particularly among young adults, reading habits have shifted. Liu (2005) found that individuals are spending more time reading electronic materials than print materials. Lone (2011) confirmed in his study that most students who enjoy reading reside in urban areas as they have better access to public libraries and facilities, particularly the Internet.

Reading Attitude

Research conducted in the United States has revealed a concerning trend of decreasing student attitudes towards reading as they get older. This trend is evident even among accomplished readers who exhibit average to low attitudes towards reading and may be influenced by the

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allure of alternative leisure activities such as video games and television (McKenna, Kear & Ellsworth, 1995). In this context, reading attitude can be defined as a complex of emotions and sentiments linked to reading that may predispose the reader to approach or avoid reading situations (Tunnell, Calder, Justen & Phaup, 1991).

Briggs (1987) posits that a positive reading attitude can serve as a motivational impetus that supports and facilitates learning, while a negative attitude can impede progress. The author further argues that children who exhibit positive attitudes towards reading have a greater likelihood of academic success. However, findings from a National Survey on Children's Attitudes toward Reading indicate that both recreational and academic attitudes towards reading among children in the United States are gradually diminishing. This trend is projected to persist as children mature and are presented with a wider array of leisure activities. This presents a critical issue as Smith (1990) notes that a positive attitude towards reading is a crucial component of reading behavior, as it encourages motivation towards achieving cognitive tasks and ultimately towards academic success.

Factors Affecting Reading Attitude

In the literature, several factors have been identified as influencing students' attitudes towards reading. Braden (2012) asserted that one of these factors is the child's upbringing and the cultural macro-system within which the child was raised. Prior to formal schooling, a child's attitudes, beliefs and knowledge about the world are predominantly shaped by family, media, and other experiences with people. A child's prior experience and knowledge about books and literacy can have a lifelong impact on their attitudes toward reading. Therefore, it is essential for teachers to create a classroom environment that caters to the cultural identities of students, and promotes a positive attitude toward reading.

In addition, Braden (2012) suggested that reading ability also affects students' attitudes towards reading. When students fall behind in their reading level, they may find reading assignments to be more difficult, frustrating, and overwhelming. Moreover, gender has been identified as another background factor related to reading attitude. Historically, girls have been found to view reading as a more satisfactory behaviour than boys. However, Parker (2004) argued that there is no correlation between reading attitude and reading ability, indicating that individuals' attitudes towards reading should not be influenced by their reading ability.

According to Palani (2012), appropriate training at the school level can help students develop their reading potential. Teachers play a crucial role in promoting positive attitudes towards reading and shaping students into avid readers. If students are instilled with the values of reading, they are likely to continue reading throughout their lives. In conclusion, students' attitudes toward reading have a significant impact on their reading habits.

Reading Preferences

Previous research has demonstrated that university students exhibit varied preferences when it comes to reading materials. Erdem's (2015) study found that respondents preferred to read novels, newspapers, and magazines during their leisure time, but were unable to devote much time to reading books due to competing priorities such as classes, social engagements, and computer usage. Mohd Noor's (2011) study focused on EFL postgraduates' reading habits and preferences, revealing that internet materials were the preferred reading material. Students who read for pleasure generally preferred materials written in their first language, while those who read for academic purposes preferred English reading materials.

Zainol Abidin, Pour-Mohammadi, and Lean (2011) found that nearly half of their respondents read in their leisure time, with newspapers, magazines, and comics being the most commonly read materials. Additionally, 40% of the respondents stated that they read because they felt they should, while 66% said that reading was necessary to pass exams. Similarly, Daniel, Esoname, Chima, and Udoaku's (2017) study reported that most students read with the sole aim of passing their exams, with only a small proportion reading out of interest or curiosity.

Lone (2011) revealed that college students predominantly read for educational purposes, with 43.49% of the respondents reading for this reason, followed by 40.23% who read to gain information. Only 11.39% read for leisure, which could be due to the pressure from parents and teachers to excel academically. Lone (2011) emphasized the importance of encouraging students to engage in both academic and leisure reading, as reading is a fundamental skill for lifelong learning, and a love for reading is best established through leisure reading.

The digital media's enormous production and consumption of information and knowledge have significantly changed the way reading is experienced. People no longer rely solely on print-based materials for reading (Chong, 2016). Mohamed et al.'s (2012) case study on students' reading behaviors showed that digital media was the preferred mode of reading for non-academic and non-course related materials. Ahmed (2016) found that undergraduate students used the internet and watched television more than they read, with only 29.6% of the respondents having read one or more books in the previous year, while the remaining 70.4% did not read any books or novels.

Nor Shahriza and Amelia (2007) revealed that university students considered websites a vital source of reading material, and spent a significant amount of time reading from websites, newspapers, and academic books. Moreover, reading had become a major leisure activity for them. Zainol Abidin et al. (2011) reported that the growth of electronic media as a source of information and entertainment had been remarkable, with an increasing number of young people opting for wireless internet access and softcopies instead of hardcopies. Hardcopies were seen as too laborious to read and time-consuming. Based on the studies discussed above,

it can be concluded that most Malaysian students read, but they prefer to use the internet as their primary medium of reading.

Research Methodology

This research study utilized a quantitative survey approach, with the target population consisting of students enrolled in the Faculty of Management, Mahendra Multiple Campus, Nepalgunj. Convenience sampling was utilized to select a representative sample size of 10% (80 questionnaires) from a population of 800 students. However, the response rate was only 59%, with 80 completed questionnaires returned.

The primary research instrument utilized in this study was a questionnaire, developed based on a comprehensive literature review and research instruments utilized in previous studies, including Smith's (1991) Adult Survey of Reading Attitude (ASRA). The questionnaire consisted of four sections: Section A gathered demographic information on respondents, Section B collected data on reading habits, including the frequency of reading, preferred types of reading materials, and online activities related to reading; Section C contained questions on factors that influence reading habits, while Section D focused on reading attitudes. . To ensure the questionnaire's validity, an expert in the research topic reviewed it, and peer briefing was employed to gather insights from other researchers working in a similar field of study throughout the research process. Received responses from respondents' were interpreted and shown in the table. So the study adopted both qualitative and quantitative research approach.

Findings and Discussion

Out of 80 respondents, 55 (68.8%) were female and the remaining 25 (31.2%) were male. Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the respondents, including the students' semester (part) of study.

Table 1

Demography of Respondents

Demographic variable	Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	25	31.2
	Female	55	68.8
Part	1	20	25.0
	2	6	7.5
	3	10	12.5
	4	1	1.2
	5	2	2.5
	6	20	25.0
	8	21	26.3

Reading Habit

The respondents' reading habits were analysed through the frequency of reading, both academic and leisure, the types of academic and leisure reading they prefer, their reading preferences when it comes to printed text and digital materials, the respondents' favourite leisure activity apart from reading, the frequency of time spent on the Internet and their activity on the Internet.

Table 2

Frequency of Academic and Leisure Reading

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Academic Reading		
Daily	30	37.5
Once a week	24	30.0
Once a month	8	10.0
Rarely	18	22.5
Never	0	0
Leisure Reading		
Daily	33	41.3
Once a week	21	26.3
Once a month	13	16.3
Rarely	11	13.8
Never	2	2.3

Table 2 shows the frequency of reading. 30 (37.5%) respondents did their academic reading daily, 24 (30%) said once a week, another 8 (10%) answered once a month and 18 (22.5%) admitted that they rarely read for academic purposes. Interestingly, 33 (41.3%) respondents did leisure reading daily, 21 (26.3%) said once a week, another 13 (16.3%) answered once a month, 11 (13.8%) admitted they rarely read for leisure and the other 2 (2.3%) never read for leisure. The findings revealed that the respondents' frequency of academic reading is very promising as most of them read academically daily or at least once a week. Equivalently for leisure reading, most of the respondents admitted that they read for leisure daily or at least once a week.

Asked about their preference of academic reading materials, 39 (48.8%) respondents picked textbooks. Only 12 (15%) admitted they read encyclopedias as most preferred to read websites (72 respondents; 90%). 30 (37.5%) respondents answered that they read journals and 20 (25%) of them admitted to reading e-textbooks. Table 3 shows the respondents' preferred reading materials.

Table 3

Preference of Academic and Leisure Reading Materials

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Academic Reading Materials		
Textbook	39	48.8
Encyclopedia	12	15.0
Website	72	90.0
Journal	30	37.5
eTextbook	20	25.0
Leisure Reading Materials		
Magazines	33	41.3
Novel	35	43.8
Comic	36	45.0
Newspaper	28	35.0
Poetry	13	16.3
Catalogue	4	5.0

From the findings, it is found that the respondents' main source of academic materials is the websites. This finding is reflected in the study by Nor Shahriza and Amelia (2007) as websites are an important source of reading for university students as they spend a significant amount of time reading the websites. The respondents of the current study also prefer to read magazines, novels, comics and newspapers for their leisure reading. This is similar Erdem (2015) who found that his respondents read novels, newspapers and magazines during their leisure time.

The respondents were also asked to rank their preference of reading materials between digital materials and printed texts. 54 (67.5%) respondents preferred digital materials while the remaining 26 (32.5%) preferred the printed texts.

Table 4

Preference between Printed Texts and Digital Materials

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Printed Texts	26	32.5
Digital Materials	54	67.5

As indicated in Table 4, most of the respondents preferred digital materials compared to printed texts. This reflects the study by Mohd Noor (2011) that found the majority of the postgraduate students chose Internet materials as their main reading materials. Similarly, Mohamed et al. (2012) also revealed that students spent so much more time reading on digital media rather than printed materials on both non- academic or non-course related materials. Zainol Abidin and associates (2011) reported that the growth of the electronic media as one of the sources of information and entertainment has been extraordinary. The amount of people especially the

young who are going wireless and using the Internet to gather information is growing every single day. Hard copy is being abandoned as young people prefer digital materials. For them, it is harder to read hard copy because it is seen as too much work and it takes too long. Liu (2005) mentioned that the reading habit of people in this digital era, especially young adults, has changed because they are spending more time reading electronic materials compared to printed materials.

Factors Influencing Reading Habit

The respondents were asked whether their family members influence them to read or not. 11 (13.8%) respondents admitted that their family members do not influence them to read. Another 24 (30%) answered that they were unsure. The other 45 (56.2%) agreed that their family members play a part in influencing them to read.

Similarly, the respondents were asked on the influence of their teachers on their reading habit. A small number (7 or 8.8%) believed their teachers do not influence them to read at all. 21 (26.3%), on the other hand, remained uncertain. The rest (52 or 65%) answered that their teachers play a part in influencing them to read.

The respondents were also asked whether the availability of the public libraries affected their reading habits. 61 (76.3%) respondents admitted that the availability of the libraries does not affect their reading habits. 8 (10%) of them, on the other hand, are unsure about this question. Only 11 (13.7%) agreed that they do not read because they do not have the access to the public libraries.

Also, the respondents were asked whether they think their reading habit is directly connected to their academic achievement or not. A small number (7 or 8.7%) disagreed as they believe reading habits should not be affiliated with academic achievement. Another 15 (18.8%) are neutral about this notion. Most of the respondents (58 or 72.5%) admitted that their reading habits are directly connected to their academic achievement. Table 5 indicates the factors influencing the respondents' reading habits.

Table 5

Factors Influencing Reading Habits

	Frequency			Percentage (%)		
	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Influence from						
Family Members	45	24	11	56.2	30.0	13.8
Teachers	52	21	7	65.0	26.3	8.8
Existence of Good Libraries	11	8	61	13.7	10.0	76.3
Academic Achievement	58	15	7	72.5	18.8	8.7

The findings have shown that the respondents' reading habit is encouraged by family members as more than half agreed that their family members influenced them to read. Besides family members, their teachers also played a big part in influencing them to read. As asserted by McColvin (1929), the biggest contributing factors are parents and friends who enjoy reading and teachers who influence their students to read. This is because teachers are role models to all the students in school when parents and family members are not present.

Existing literature argues that library is one of the resources that can stimulate and develop the reading interest of the students and it plays a vital role in promoting reading (Anyaeibu, 2016; McColvin, 1929). Interestingly, the findings of this study proved the opposite as the respondents admitted that the existence of good libraries does not affect their reading habit.

Another contributing factor that influences the reading habit of the respondents in the current study is academic achievement. The respondents agreed that they read for their academic achievement as they believe that reading habit is directly connected to their academic achievement. As cited in Daniel et al. (2017), a majority of students read with the sole purpose of passing their examination. Lone (2011) supported this finding as his study revealed that college students mostly read for the purpose of education.

Reading Attitude

The respondents were asked on the influence of their teachers on their reading habit. 45 (56.2%) respondents agreed that their family members play a big role in influencing them to read. Another 24 (30%) answered that they were neutral on this question. The rest of the respondents (11 or 13.8%) disagreed and said their family members do not influence them to read at all.

Likewise, the respondents were asked on the influence of their teachers on their reading habit. 52 (65%) respondents agreed that their teachers influenced them to read. The other 21 (26.3%), on the other hand, remained uncertain. Only a small number (7 or 8.8%) believed that their teachers do not influence them to read at all.

Table 6

Reading Attitude

	Frequency			Percentage (%)		
	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Influence from						
Family Members	45	24	11	56.2	30.0	13.8
Teachers	52	21	7	65.0	26.3	8.8

It can be concluded that parents and teachers play a vital role in students' life as the respondents believed that their parents and teachers influenced them to read. This is supported by Braden (2012) who mentioned that one factor that contributed to a child's reading attitude is how the

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child was raised. The macro system and culture of the child was brought up definitely affect his reading attitude. Braden (2012) asserted that before a child experiences going to school, his source of beliefs, attitude and knowledge towards the world come from the family. From his prior experience and knowledge about books and literacy, a child transfers everything to his present experience at school. Hence, it is really important for teachers to influence children to read so they will develop a positive reading attitude because students' reading attitude is partially a socially constructed concept.

Impact of Reading Attitude on Reading Habit

As mentioned earlier, most of the respondents (72.5%) believed that their reading habits are directly connected to their academic achievement. When the item was cross tabulated with their frequency of reading, 67.5% read academic materials daily or at least once a week. Interestingly, only 5.6% out of 22.5% of the respondents who answered they rarely read disagreed that reading habit is directly connected to their academic achievement.

The respondents were asked if they believe that reading will help them do better in their career. The item was cross tabulated with the respondents' frequency of academic reading. 77.6% of them believed that reading will help them in their career. Thus, 67.5% of them take the initiative to read academically daily or once a week. Not surprisingly, only 5.6% out of 22.5% of the respondents who answered they rarely read academic materials disagreed that reading will help them to do better in their career.

The respondents were asked about the relationship of reading with employability. Most of the respondents (59 or 73.8%) agreed that reading will help them a lot in finding jobs. 20 (25%) were uncertain. Only a small number (1 or 1.2%) believed that reading does not help them in finding jobs. The respondents were also asked on the relationship of reading and their career. Not surprisingly, most of them (62 or 77.6%) agreed that reading will help them to do better in their career. Only 1 (1.3%) admitted that they believe reading does not help them to do better in their career.

From the findings, it is shown that the respondents believed that reading is highly connected to their academic achievement. It can be assumed that the purpose of the respondents doing academic reading daily or at least once a week is very much associated with their goals of performing better academically.

This is supported by Florence et al. (2017) who confirmed that good reading habits enhance academic performance. Similarly, Anyaegbu (2016) revealed that students' poor reading habit affects their academic performance.

Most of the respondents believed that reading will help them in finding jobs and they agreed that reading will help them do better in their career. Hence, most of them read for leisure and academically daily or at least once a week for these purposes. As discussed previously, Inderjit (2014) stated that reading contributes significantly to job success and development in career.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study's findings indicate that the majority of students engage in both academic and leisure reading on a daily basis, for educational and pleasure purposes. Furthermore, digital materials are preferred by students due to their availability and perceived superiority compared to printed texts. Additionally, the study establishes a positive correlation between reading and academic achievement, highlighting its importance for future career prospects.

The research provides various recommendations based on the results. Firstly, considering the rapid technological changes, a nationwide survey should be conducted to determine the impact of digital reading on the reading habits of Nepalese students. Secondly, teachers should continue to motivate students to read as they play a significant role in shaping their reading habits. Given that students prefer digital materials, teachers should assign readings that utilise online resources. Moreover, teachers should be aware of changes in their students' reading patterns to meet their needs. Finally, considering the preference for digital materials, educational institutions such as schools and universities should provide students with increased access to digital materials and web databases, to promote good reading habits.

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