



RESEARCH PAPER

Impact of Reading Habits on the Academic Achievement of University Students in Azad Jammu and Kashmir

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ABSTRACT

The present study has been conducted to explore the "Impact of reading habits on the academic achievement of university students in Azad Jammu and Kashmir". The objective of the study was to investigate the reading habits of the university students. Survey method was used for gathering required data from the targeted population. The population was selected from the public sector universities in the State of Azad Jammu & Kashmir. The population comprised of 2739 students in the subject of English, Education and Economics at BS level programs from five (5) public sector universities in the State of Azad Jammu & Kashmir, by using disproportionate stratified sampling technique. The researcher personally visited each sample University to collect the data. The data was tabulated and analyzed through statistical handling (SPSS-22) and were analyzed through descriptive statistics. The findings of present study revealed that majority of the respondents prefer to read in English and Urdu languages. More than one third of the respondents rarely read books. There is more need to develop reading habits among students in the 21st century more than at any other time in human history. Habitual reading is considered as one of the most important exercises for enhancing one's academic performance.

KEYWORDS Academic Achievements, Reading Habits, Reading Material

Introduction

Reading habits are well-planned and deliberate pattern of study which has attained a form of consistency on the part of students toward understanding academic subjects and passing at examinations. 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. While some students have strong reading habits, others tend to exhibit poor reading habit (Bashir &Mattoo, 2012).

A creative and pragmatic education involves the habit of personal investigation. The act of personal investigation requires self-study to be followed by self-thinking and analysis. Self-study, otherwise referred to as reading at one's own accord, requires a habit, which is known as reading habit. Reading makes way for a better understanding of one's own experiences and it can be an exciting voyage to self-discovery. Reading habit is best formed at a young impressionable age in school, but once formed it can last one's life time (Green, 2001). 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. Reading habits helps the learner in obtaining meaningful and desirable

knowledge. Reading habits act as a strong weapon for the students to excel in life (Bashir &Mattoo, 2012).

Developing Reading Habits

According to Palani (2012), reading habit is an essential and important aspect for creating a literate society in this world. It shapes the personality of individuals, and it helps them to develop proper thinking methods, and creates new ideas. However, the developments in the Mass Media had continued to influence interest in reading books, magazines and journals, among others. Palani (2012) is of the opinion that, effective reading is important avenue of effective learning and reading is interrelated with the total educational process and hence, educational success requires successful reading habit. He believes reading is the identification of the symbols and the association of appropriate meaning with them. It requires identification and comprehension. Comprehension skills help the learner to understand the meaning of words in isolation and in context. Before the advent of the television, both the young and the old found enough time to read. Apart from teachers, other professionals used to spend their leisure time in reading both English and vernacular literature. English medium schools almost always demanded extra reading from their students. But all these have become a thing of the past. Palani (2012) further added that, nowadays, reading habit has lost its importance as both the young and the old are glued to the television. As far as educational institutions are concerned, coaching students for the examinations seems to be the be-all and end-all of our educational system. Many researchers like Ogbodo (2002), Gupta (2010), and Singh (2011) have done work on reading that how it effects on the academic performance of students (Agbezree, 2001).

Importance of Reading

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.

Dollahet *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.

Reading is the fundamental process of learning. It is the practice of comprehending and acquiring knowledge for personal growth and development. It is an essential process that aids the conception of thoughts and knowledge in ones chosen field of study or specialization. Therefore, for students in tertiary institutions to perform well in their academic pursuit, reading is the basis to effective learning. Reading

habits enable students to have effective study skills, knowledge of different information resources, and effective retention capacity. Reading is an essential tool for knowledge transfer and the habit of reading is an academic activity that increases skills in reading strategies. Thereof, cultivating reading habits is tantamount to student's academic performance. According to academic success at the tertiary level is likely a multidimensional phenomenon that includes languages proficiency, learning, study strategies and certain personal characteristics. And this could be achieved when one imbibe a good reading habits which make him/her a lifelong learner (Tan, 2007).

Reading is life skill

During university life reading habits is an essential skill necessary in the acquisition of knowledge which is highly demanding in the life of every student in the academic environment. When young people miss the opportunity of appreciating and loving to read, at university stage, they will find it challenging to imbibe reading habit in future life. Reading develops the mind, imagination, creative potentials, improves spelling and expands the vocabulary. Reading helps students think critically, develop their imagination, generate sense of creativity and improves reading comprehension skills. Reading makes intensive impacts on academics. But the majority of the university students not give substantial time for reading and a number of students spent their academic hours using social media and unnecessary activities (Issa, 2012).

Background of the reading habit study

Sufficient literature is available about the reading habits and academic achievement at elementary and secondary level but few research are available at university level in Pakistan. Similarly, very rare attempts have been made on students reading habits in reference to Azad Jammu & Kashmir. Therefore, there is a dire need to explore and analyze students' reading habits and its impact on their academic achievement at university level. Therefore, the study was designed to investigate the "Impact of Reading Habits on the Academic achievement of university students in Azad Jammu and Kashmir".

Material and Methods

This study was descriptive in nature for which survey method was employed for the collection of data. Sekaran (2005) suggested that the survey method is useful way to collect information from selected sample of the concern universe for an existing phenomenon. A survey is a type of research that involves gathering data from a predetermined group of people to get knowledge and insights about a variety of issues. They can serve a variety of objectives and depending on the methodology used and the study's goal, researchers can conduct them in a variety of ways.

The population of the study comprised of all enrolled students of BS program of Education, English and Economics in the public sector universities of Azad Jammu & Kashmir. There were seven (7) Universities in the state of Azad Jammu & Kashmir, five (5) are in public sector while two (2) are in private sector. The population for the current study comprised of 2739 enrolled students in BS program of English, Education and Economics at five (5) public sector Universities in Azad Jammu & Kashmir in the year 2019 (HED, AJK, 2019).

Results and Discussion

Table 1
Student's language Preference for Reading

Statement	Option	f	%
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	Urdu	145	31%
In which language do you prefer to read?	English	23	4.9%
	Both Urdu & English	282	60.4%
	Mother language	17	3.6%

Table 1 shows the student's perceptions about their preference of language for reading. Table shows that 60.4% university students prefer both Urdu and English language for reading. Thirty-one 31 % students prefer Urdu language for reading 4.9% Students prefer English language while only 3.6 % students prefer their mother language for reading.

Table 2
Student's Preference of Situation for Reading

Statement	Option	f	%
In which situation do you prefer to read?	Alone	262	56.1%
	With peer	127	27.2%
	With group	60	12.8%
	In class	17	4%

Table 2 shows the student's preference of situation for reading. Table shows that 56.1% university students prefer to sit alone for reading. Twenty-seven point two 27.2% % students prefer to read with peers 12.8 % students prefer to read in groups while only 4% students prefer to read in their class.

Table 3
Student's Preference time for Reading

Statement	Option	f	%
In which time do you prefer to read?	At morning	93	20 %
	At day	118	25.3%
	At evening	36	8%
	At night	219	47%

Table 3 shows the student's source of borrowing books for reading. Table shows that 47% university students prefer to read book at nighttime, 25.3% students prefer to read at daytime, 20% students prefer to read at morning time while only 8% students prefer to read at evening time.

Table 4
Student's source of borrowing books for reading

Statement	Option	f	%
How do you get books?	I buy them myself	233	50%
	I borrow them from the classroom library	75	16.1%
	I borrow them from the university library	60	13%
	I borrow them from my friends	99	21%

Table 4 shows the student's source of borrowing books for reading. Table shows that 50% university students buy their books themselves for reading, 16.1% students borrow books from classroom library, and 21% students borrow books from the friends while only 13 % students borrow books from university library for reading.

Table 5
Student's Preference of Place for Reading

Statement	Option	f	%
Where you prefer to read?	At class	66	14.1%
	At library	57	12.2%
	At home	241	52%
	At park	101	22%

Table 5 shows the student's preference of place for reading. Table shows that 52% university students prefer to read at home. Twenty 22% students prefer to read at park 14.1 % students prefer to read at class while only 12.2 % students prefer to read at library.

Table 6
Student's Starting Stage of Reading

Statement	Option	f	%
At what stage you started reading books?	I rarely read books	169	36.2%
	I have read since I was in high school	152	33%
	I have read since I was in college	15	3.2%
	I have read since I am the university	131	28.1%

Table 6 shows student's starting stage of reading. Table shows that 36.2% University students rarely read books. Thirty-three 33% students started reading books at the stage of school 28.1% students started reading books at the stage of college while only 3.2 students started reading books at the University stage.

Table 7
Student's Reason for Taking Books for Reading from the Library

Statement	Option	f	%
You borrow and read books from the university library when...?	I have more time in the University	130	28%
	The books were more interesting	241	52%
	I have a company for reading	14	6.7%
	My teachers suggested me about the books	65	13.9%

Table 7 shows about the reason of borrowing books for their reading. Table shows that 52% University students borrow books from the university library for their reading because the books were interesting. Twenty-eight 28% students borrow books from the university library for their reading because they have more time in the University for reading. Nineteen 13.9% students borrow books because their teachers 'suggested books to them while only 6.7% data show that they borrow books from the university library due to their company for reading.

Table 8
Student's Extra Reading

Statement	Option	f	%
When your teacher discusses something Interesting, you might read more about it	Always	15	3.2%
	Often	37	8%
	Sometimes	242	52%

Rarely	167	36%
Never	6	1.3%

Table 8 shows that student’s additional reading when their teachers discuss something interesting to them. Table shows that 52% university students sometimes read additional things when their teacher discusses something interesting to them. Thirty-six 36% students read rarely, eight 8% students read often, three-point two 3.2% students always read while only 1.3% university students never read additional thing when their teachers discuss something interesting to them.

Table 9
Students Reading about teacher Assigned Material

Statement	Option	f	%
If teacher assigns you a reading material, then you read this...	Always	20	4.2%
	Often	174	37.2%
	Sometimes	163	34.9%
	Rarely	110	23.5%
	Never	0	0%

Table 9 shows students’ readiness for reading material when teacher assigned them for reading. Table shows that 37.2 % university students often read material when teacher assigned to them for reading. Thirty-five point three 34.9% students read sometimes, 23.5% students read rarely, 4.2% students read always while only 0% never read material when teacher assigned to them for reading.

Table 10
Student’s Reading more due to Media Highlights

Statement	Option	f	%
When the media highlight an issue, then. You try to search more about it.	Always	0	0 %
	Often	52	11%
	Sometimes	231	49.4%
	Rarely	103	22.1%
	Never	83	17.7%

Table 10 shows about that student are reading more when the media highlight an issue. Table shows that 49.4% university students sometimes read more when the media highlight an issue. Twenty-two point two 22.2% students read rarely, 17.7% students read never, 11.1% read often while only 0% university students read always when the media highlight an issue.

Table 11
Making Picture and Image in the Mind during Reading

Statement	Option	f	%
You make pictures in your mind, When have you read?	Always	12	2.5%
	Often	72	15.4%
	Sometimes	55	11.7%
	Rarely	128	27.4%
	Never	200	42.8%

Table 11 shows about that student’s making picture and image in their mind during reading. Table shows that 42.8% University students never make picture or image in their mind during their reading practices. Twenty-seven point two 27.4%

students rarely make picture and image in their mind, 15.4% students often make picture, twelve, 11.7% sometimes make while only 2.5% always make picture and image in their mind during their reading practices.

Conclusions and Discussion

The study showed that one third of the university students responded that reading is very hard for them but few of them responded that sometimes they enjoyed reading. Finding of this study is lined with views of PISA (2004) who also found that one third of the Scottish students never or hardly ever read and almost one third of them feeling that it is waste of time. Finding of this study showed that majority of students do not have any tendency towards reading books. This is contradicting with the results of Nestle Family Monitor (2003) in which found that large number of students read books. Another finding of the study showed students prefer to choose a print book rather than an e-book or a magazine or etc. Finding of this study is in lined with the results of PISA (2004) in which showed almost half of the students stating that they only read they have to read.

Another finding of this study is that there was large number of readers who read for less than an hour and someone suggested to students to read a book, they will not pay much attention on it. This finding conflicts with schoolchildren's studies conducted for World Book Day in 2002, which indicated that girls spent significantly more time reading, precisely 4.5 hours per week, than boys (15- to 16-year-olds), who spent 9 hours per week playing video games or 11 hours per week watching television. Study further found that many university students used face book on daily basis. This is aligned with the study of Orkaa (2021) found that engagement of students 'nonacademic activities, Laziness and chatting became the major factors that hindered students' development of reading habits. Another finding of this study is that twitter user students were vey less; however, other websites and other social media user number were too high. This showed that number of user face book, websites and other social media was very high, but majority of the students they don't paid attention to read books, or they don't like to read books at all. It was also found to note that more than half of students prefer to read alone.

This was contradicting with the results of Gilbert, and Fister (2011) who suggested that students have a far higher interest in reading and believed that reading is lifelong learning. In this study, it was found that half of the students preferred to read at nighttime whereas very less number of the students preferred to read at evening time. This study in lined with the results of Scottish analysis of PISA data (2004) that half of the students read at least 30 minutes a day, one third of them read 30 to 60 minutes a day. The study showed that majority of students read less than one hour, even when the reading was their own choice. The results of this study in lined with the study of Ameyaw and Anto, (2018) who also found that very less number of them read between 1 to 2 hours in day time and results of this study contradicting with the results of Nestle Family Monitor (2003), which surveyed that a large number of young people read books in their spare time, with few numbers of them read books every day.

Another finding of this study is that more than half of the students hate reading and they read as little as possible. The study revealed that very less number of the students acknowledge that they prefer to read in the library. This result is contradicting with the study of Kavi, Tackie and Bugyei, (2015) in which their findings showed that majority of the students acknowledged the importance of reading. It was also confirmed in the study that number of students visited the library to read books and also vey a smaller number of students enjoyed reading. The result is supported by the findings of Orkaa (2018) in which indicated poor reading habits of students, and the few students indicated that they visited library and they encouraged to read to acquire knowledge that would improve them. Overall in the context of reading habits of students, results of this

study are supported by the findings of Orkaa (2018) that many students do not have possess positive reading habits, and also in lined with results of Mathewson's (2004) that majority of students do not have intention to read and suggested by Mathewson's (2004) that students need to be motivated to read by narrating to them stories about certain character in the texts and presenting them with more reading tasks. Majority of the BS students in the universities of AJK prefer to read books in both English and Urdu languages. They prefer to read alone in night time at their home. They read and purchase books which are interesting. Students always read when media highlighted an issue. They sometimes read when their teacher recommends them any material for their reading. Mostly students select their books by themselves; they mostly choose printed books for their reading.

Recommendations

Following recommendations were made on the basis of findings and conclusions.

1. The findings of present study revealed that more than one third of Students rarely reads books and very few students read a book in a last academic year. It is therefore recommended that students may be motivated and encouraged by their teachers to read different books, reference books, and other informational resources.
2. In the findings of present study, it was found that majority of students do not visit library and they only rely on the notes and handouts given by their teachers. Hence, it is recommended that reading culture may be encouraged in students at an early stage. Teachers may use teaching methods and approaches that would make students have an interest in reading. For this purpose, department head assign faculty to monitor students while they are studying in library.
3. The findings of present study demonstrated that majority of students do not engage themselves in reading during free time at university. The concern university administration may provide conducive environment that will stimulate students to read. For which library culture may be promote at departmental level.

The researcher believes that if these suggestions are applied holistically, students' reading habits may be further improved, which could have an effect on their academic performance. Everyone should read regularly because it frees him from the chains of ignorance. It is a productive way to absorb and grasp information for one's own development and advancement. Students who develop a reading habit may become more responsible and ready for independent living. Therefore, children need to develop the habit of reading if they want to be highly focused, adaptable, and educated throughout their lives.

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