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**Reading Habits and Attitudes of Undergraduate Students: A Gender Based Comparative Study of Government Degree College (Boys) and Government Degree College for Women, Anantnag (J&K)**

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**ABSTRACT**

Reading habit is an essential and important aspect for creating the literate society in this world. It shapes the personality of an individual and it helps them to develop the proper thinking methods and creating new ideas. One of the main functions of library system at college level is to inculcate the reading habits among the students. Today's students are the future citizens and also the nation builders of tomorrow. In present scenario, due to the influence of the social media and digital environment, students do not show much interest in reading the books, magazines and journals etc. The current study was carried out to investigate the disparity and dynamics of Reading Habits and Attitudes, also influence of social media on Reading Habits among the students of GDC (Boys) and GDC (Women). Based on the sample of 300 students, it was found that significant differences exist between the two groups of students in terms of types of reading material and reading resources used. Differences in reading habits and attitudes were also observed between male and female participants. The results clearly show that there is much disparity in reading habits and attitudes between the two genders. Social media and other digital media have greatly impacted the reading habits and Behaviour across the genders also.

## **KEY WORDS**

Reading Habits, Reading attitudes, Social media, ICT, Information Behaviour, Undergraduate students, Information seeking behaviour.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Reading ability is recognized as an important factor that contributes to students' success in college academics. Students who read frequently tend to become skillful readers. Their reading skills support them in deeply understanding information and knowledge, and also prepare them for university academics and research. Reading, a lifelong habit, is the major source of access to the knowledge. It is taken as an implicit practice that supports an individual to achieve original power and develops one's critical thinking capability. Reading habit, thus, is considered as an essential means for the development of personal traits, mental abilities, getting knowledge, information and understanding of an individual. Regular and systematic reading sharpens the intellect, refines the emotions, elevates tastes and provides perspectives for one's living thereby prepares a person for an effective participation in the social, religious, cultural and political life. Reading fires the imagination of the person by adding new sight to eyes and new wisdom to mind. Reading loads the mind with new software (Satija, 2002).

The reading habit refers to the frequency of reading, and the average time spent on reading materials. Cleary cited in Abeyrathna (2004) stated that an individual's interest is determined to a considerable extent by the amount of reading materials he will read and the intensity with which he will pursue his reading activity. By reading books, one gets confirmation or rejection of one's own ideas, which makes one think more critically about right and wrong in the society (Bergland in Abeyrathna, 2004). None the less, Bas (2012) emphasized a favourable reading habit as a prerequisite for a healthy intellectual growth and plays a very crucial role in enabling a person to achieve practical efficiency. Therefore, there is the urgent need to develop the reading habit among the students in the society, to groom their whole personality and Intellectualism.

According to Kim and Anderson (2011), the more time students spend on reading, the more skillful they become and the better students are at reading, the more success they achieve in their courses. Reading activity leads to important cognitive outcomes and may result in habits that affect the rest of students' academic lives (Schutte & Malouff, 2007). Indeed, students develop their critical thinking, and problem-solving skills through reading processes as a result of regularly using their abilities of thinking such as imagination, analysis, judgment and

creativity (Igwe, 2011). The results can be achieved because of regular reading facilitates the development of reading competence (Schiefele, Schaffner, Möller, & Wigfield, 2012). Reading, therefore, can be seen as an important factor that contributes to the growth of students' intellect and emotion, and paves the way to life-long learning (Lone, 2011). We are currently experiencing the exponential growth of information and entertainment being created in a digital format. These resources are gaining importance particularly among younger people in Information society.

## **2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The general objective of the study is to understand the reading habits and attitudes of students and any disparity between the male and female students of the selected colleges. The specific objectives of the study are:

- I. To study the reading habits and attitudes among the undergraduate students
- II. To determine disparity in reading habits and preference in relation to the academics across the genders
- III. To analyze impact and influence of ICT on reading interests and attitudes among the students.
- IV. To assess the utilization of library resources and services by undergraduate students with respect to their genders.

## **3. HYPOTHESES**

Following Hypothesis were formulated for the study:

- I. There is no gender disparity in reading habits and preference in relation to the academics among the undergraduate students.
- II. There is no gender disparity in use and impact of ICT based information resources in undergraduate students.
- III. There is no gender disparity in utilization of library resources and services in undergraduate students.

## **4. METHODOLOGY**

For the present study, descriptive survey research method has been adopted. A self structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The target population for present study is 7576 female students of GDC (Women) and 7170 of GDC (Boys). Hence, the total target population from two Colleges constituted to be 14746 students, comprising of all streams across all

semesters for the session 2018 viz, Medical, Non-Medical, Arts, Humanities, Commerce, Home Science, BCA, BBA, Mass Communications and Journalism Faculties. Descriptive statistic techniques like tables of frequency counts and percentages were used in the analysis. Appropriate statistical softwares like SPSS and MS-Excel were used for data analysis and interpretation. ANOVA were used for hypothesis testing.

#### **4.1.Sample Size**

There are many statistical techniques available for calculating the sample size from a particular target population, with advancements in technology many online sample calculators are also available for the purpose. For present study Sample size was determined by using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula which is considered one of the best for survey type researches. The formula for calculating the sample size is:

$$S = \frac{X^2NP(1-P)}{d^2(N-1) + X^2P(1-P)}$$

S= required sample size

$X^2$  = the table value of chi square for 1 degree of freedom at the desired confidence level (1.96x1.96= 3.841)

N= population size

P= The population proportion (assumed to be 0.5 since this would provide the maximum sample size)

d= degree of accuracy expressed as proportion, (0.05)

The population of the students and faculty under study was 14746. Further, to ensure an optimal sample size, the 95% confidence level was pre-assigned and a small sampling error (0.05) was fixed. Let the population distribution be 50%, and then applying the above formula:

$$S = \frac{3.841 \times 14746 \times 0.5(1-0.5)}{0.0025(14746-1) + 3.841 \times 0.5(1-0.5)}$$

S = 374.40,

**S= 374**

Thus, the Sample size for the present study is 374.

#### **4.2.Administration of the Tool**

As the study is based on 2 different colleges, the sample was divided into 2 equal halves as such 187 questionnaires were distributed in each college. Stratified sampling method was used

for administration of the tool where each college was stratified on the basis of departments or subject streams, students from each of the departments were selected on random basis. The questionnaires were administered by the researchers themselves and personal assistance was provided in filling up the questionnaires wherever necessary. Finally the filled up questionnaires were collected back with an overall response rate of 86.53%.

Table 1 Total Population and Sample Size of the Study

<b>Name of the College</b>	<b>Total Population</b>	<b>No. of Questionnaires Distributed</b>	<b>No. of Questionnaires Collected Back</b>	<b>Response Rate</b>
Govt. Degree College for Women, Anantnag	7576	187	168	89.83%
Govt. Degree College (Boys) Anantnag	7170	187	156	83.24%
<b>Total</b>	<b>14746</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>86.53%</b>

## 5. REVIEW LITERATURE

The review focuses on reading habits and reading interest in order to enhance the understanding of the area to provide a conceptual framework for future study. The scope of this literature review extracted from books, journals articles, conference papers, theses & dissertations, technical reports, bibliographies, speeches and talks both in print based as well as in electronic media on the subject of reading habits and reading interests. Singh, (2011) investigated academic achievement and study habits of higher secondary students. The study depicted that girls and boys differ significantly in their study habits and academic achievement. Bhan and Gupta, (2010) examined study habits and academic achievement among the Students belonging to different categories. The study revealed that gender has no significant impact on the study habits and academic achievement of the students. Nor Shahriza, (2006) carried out a study to understand the reading habits and attitudes at the Bachelor of IT students and the Bachelor of Art students from the International Islamic University Malaysia. Findings reported that significant differences exist between the two groups of students in terms of types of material and reading resources used. Rajput, P.S. (2014) analysed the reading skills prospects and challenges of the students of Government Arts and Commerce College, Indore, M.P., India. The study showed that, majority of the respondents spent 2– 4 hours daily for reading. Many of the students

have got guidance to promote reading skills. Bas, (2012) established through his findings that, reading habit of high school students showed a significant difference according to gender variable in favour of female students. Clark and Foster, (2005) are of the view that girls prove to be more positive than boys towards reading. But in school years, boys read more for getting a good job in future while girls read for fun and for some break. Gender and background have an effect on reading abilities of students. According to Özbay, (2006), individual reading preferences differ in terms of interest, attention, aptitude and situation. Reading interest, curiosity or inclination seems to be different with boys and girls having different reading habits and reading aptitudes such that girls enjoy reading more than boys. Dilshad, Adnan and Akram, (2013) investigated gender differences in reading habits of university students and reported that reading habits of male and female students are somewhat different. In another study, Frankenstein, (2009) stated that boys and girls have different choices when it comes to reading. Shafi and Loan, (2010) also found that gender was major factor impacting students' reading habits and female students were better than male students in reading culture. Dayioglu and Turut-Asik, (2004) in their study of gender differences in academic achievement in a large public university in Turkey reported a high gender disparity in various spheres of public life and the patriarchal social structure in Turkey as a major factor that may lead to poorer academic performance among female university students. Synder, (1981) highlights that girls read significantly more books than boys did. Topics liked by both sexes included cartoons and comic books weird but true stories, rock stars, ghosts, magic, stories about famous people and exploring the unknown. Further, girls tend to be moderate and heavy book readers, while boys tend to be either light readers or non-readers (Patterson, 1986). Majid & Tan, (2007) found that 57.6% of the children in Singapore prefer playing on computer or surfing the Internet whereas only 44.1% prefers reading as their leisure time activity. Kamalipour, Robinson & Nortman, (1998) revealed that students spend 45.05% of their waking hours per week attending to both electronic and print media for study and leisure reading activities. On division it is apparent that college students use print media (11.09%) more for study related activities whereas regarding the leisure use of media, electronic media far outdistanced print media ( 27.83% compared with 3.84% ).

## **6. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

Data analysis for this study is based on the 324 questionnaires administered and collected back from the two colleges under study.

### 6.1. Time Spend for Reading

Table.2. Time Spend by the Students for Reading with Respect to their Gender

Time Spend Per Day	Gender of Students	
	Male	Female
1-2 Hours	64	49
2-4 Hours	57	83
4-6 Hours	26	21
More Than 6 Hours	09	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>168</b>

Table 2 highlights that most of the male students spend 1-2 hours for reading while as most of the female students spend 2-4 hours for reading which clearly indicates that female students spend more time for reading compared to their male counterparts.

### 6.2. Reading Material Used

Table.3. Reading Material used by the students

Reading Material Used	Gender of Students	
	Male	Female
Academic Books	48	76
Newspapers	32	11
Magazines	11	14
Fictions/ Novels	03	23
Online Reading Material	62	44
<b>Total</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>168</b>

Table 3 depicts that most of the male students prefer on-line reading material while as most of the female students prefer academic reading materials. Fictions and novels are least preferred by the male students while as in female students newspapers are the least preferred sources. This could be one of the reasons that female students are over shining the male counterparts in the academic results for last decade or so. Hypothesis I is related to the findings of this table and is testing is given as under:

- **Hypothesis I ( $H_0$ ):** *There is no gender disparity in reading habits and preference in relation to the academics among the undergraduate students.*

ANOVA test was administered to test the hypothesis, the results of the ANOVA are as under.



Table. 4. The Results of ANOVA

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Rows	4831.40	4.00	1207.85	9.35	0.03	6.39
Columns	14.40	1.00	14.40	<b>0.11</b>	<b>0.76</b>	<b>7.71</b>
Error	516.60	4.00	129.15			
Total	5362.40	9.00				

The calculated value of  $F = 0.11$  which is less than the critical value of  $F = 7.71$  and also the p value is 0.76 which is significantly higher than the table value at the given degree of freedom. The above factors give us enough statistical evidence to accept the null hypothesis. As such Hypothesis I is accepted.

### 6.3. Contents of Online Reading

Table 5. Contents of Online Reading

Contents of On-line Reading	Gender of Students	
	Male	Female
Online News	27	23
Online Magazines	14	26
Online Academic portals	24	29
e-mails	38	31
Social Networking Sites	53	59
<b>Total</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>168</b>

Table 6 shows the contents of online reading by the students under study. The table depicts that both male and female students prefer social networking sites over other online resources of information. Online academic portals are not given that much of interest and preference in both the genders, however e-mail service is quite significantly used by both the genders., Hypothesis II is related to the findings of this table and is testing is given as under:

- **Hypothesis II ( $H_0$ ):** *There is no gender disparity in use and impact of ICT based information resources in undergraduate students.*

ANOVA test was administered to test the hypothesis, the results of the ANOVA are as under.

Table. 6. The Results of ANOVA

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Rows	1609.40	4.00	402.35	<b>13.34</b>	<b>0.01</b>	<b>6.39</b>
Columns	14.40	1.00	14.40	0.48	0.53	7.71
Error	120.60	4.00	30.15			
Total	1744.40	9.00				

The calculated value of  $F = 13.34$  which is greater than the critical value of  $F = 6.39$  and also the p value is 0.01 which is significantly less than the table value at the given degree of freedom. The above factors give us enough statistical evidence to reject the null hypothesis. As such Hypothesis II is rejected.

#### 6.4. Utilization of Library Resources and Services by the Students

Table 7. Utilization of Library Resources and Services by the Students

Library Resource/ Service	Utilization					
	Male Students			Female Students		
	Fully	Partially	Little	Fully	Partially	Little
Print Resources	59	63	34	31	81	56
Online Resources	21	43	92	29	66	73
Library Staff	09	32	115	04	30	134
<b>Total</b>	<b>156</b>			<b>168</b>		

Table 7 show that female students use online resources on a much higher rate than the male students however in case of utilization of human resource available in the library male students are ahead of their female counterparts. Little utilization of online resources is surely a matter of concern and the most possible reason for that, as indicated by the study if the least assistance and support provided by the library staff. The results of the table show that only 09 male and 04 female students utilize the assistance of human resource in the library. Hypothesis III is related to the findings of this table and is testing is given as under:

- **Hypothesis II ( $H_0$ ):** *There is no gender disparity in utilization of library resources and services in undergraduate students.*

ANOVA test was administered to test the hypothesis, the results of the ANOVA are as under.

Table. 8. The Results of ANOVA

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Rows	0.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	6.61
Columns	16272.00	5.00	3254.40	<b>5.05</b>	<b>0.05</b>	<b>5.05</b>
Error	3218.00	5.00	643.60			
Total	19490.00	11.00				

The calculated value of  $F = 5.05$  which is equal to the the critical value of  $F = 5.05$  and also the p value is 0.05 which is also equal to the table value at the given degree of freedom. The above factors give us enough statistical evidence to reject the null hypothesis. As such Hypothesis II is rejected.

### 6.5.Satisfaction of Students with the Library Resources and Services

Table. 9. Satisfaction of Students with the Library Resources and Services

Library Resource/ Service	Satisfaction Level					
	Male Students			Female Students		
	FS	PS	LS	FS	PS	LS
Print Resources	32	65	89	49	72	47
Online Resources	43	67	46	39	44	85
Library Staff	51	44	61	34	57	77
Library Services	34	59	63	51	43	74
Library Infrastructure	28	53	75	26	64	78
<b>Total</b>	<b>156</b>			<b>168</b>		

FS= Fully Satisfied, PS= Partially Satisfied, LS Little Satisfied

Table 9 shows the satisfaction level of students with various library resources and services. The table depicts that most of the male students are least satisfied with the Print Resources, Library Infrastructure, Library Services and Library Staff however most of the female students are least satisfied with online resources and Library Staff.

## 7. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

From the data analysis, it may be concluded that social media has definitely impacted and influenced the reading habits and attitudes among the genders. Moreover, it can be derived from

the study that there is gender disparity in the academic achievement of undergraduate students. The study further shows, that female students are more energetic and active in terms of reading habits in comparison to their male counterparts. This is the main reason that female students are leading in academic merit and achievement almost in every year in the valley. The prolonged political conflict is having negative impact on academic performance on male students. A positive relationship was established between reading habits and academic achievement of undergraduate students across the genders. This is the point of the fact that all necessary steps should be taken to ensure that students are made aware about the importance of reading habits. The role of library and information centers is prim in imparting reading habits and improving academic achievements of the students. Library now a days has become a learning resource center but unfortunately the findings of the study depict a gloomy picture of the college libraries as most of the students from both the genders are least satisfied with their library resources and services.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

In present scenario the problem that confronts most of the students to their poor performance in tests and examinations is lack of proper reading habits. For an excellent performance, there is need for the student to form good reading and study habits. At present, due to the influence of the mass media, people do not show much interest in reading books, magazines and journals, among others. Reading habit refers to the behaviour, which expresses the likeness of reading and tastes of reading. Reading is generally accepted as a way of acquiring new information and new knowledge. It is not only to increase knowledge but also to build maturity and widen awareness of contemporary issue. A good reading habit is important for the development of personalities and mental capacities. This habit is necessary for a healthy intellectual growth and plays a very crucial role in enabling a person to achieve language proficiency. Moreover, an individual's interest to read is determined by the considerable extent of the amount and intensity of pursuing the reading activity. By reading books frequently and having a good reading habit, the reader is able to analyze other's idea, which makes one think more critically. An overall revision and revamping of library system in the colleges of the state is the need of the hour. The technical and professional competencies of the library staff also needs to be addressed at the earliest to revitalize the education system in the state.

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