

Identification of Factors Promoting Reading Habits of Students: A Case Study on Pakistan

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Abstract

This study is aimed at exploring the factors that are influential in promoting the reading habits of students. The data was collected from 1050 students of three public universities of Punjab with the help of a questionnaire. The study reveals the fact that reading habits are being nurtured from home in which parents play a vital role. Along with parents, teachers nourish this reading habit through their continuous guidance and support. It is recommended that parents and teachers should work in collaboration with one another and create a healthy atmosphere that increases the interest of students in reading. This self-interest and support of parents and teachers help in promoting the reading habits of students.

Keywords: Reading habits; effective study; parental contribution; teachers' support; self-interest

Introduction:

Reading, a long-lasting habit, is the major access to the knowledge room. In the view of Clarke and Rumbold (2006), it is considered as an implicit practice that helps to develop an individual's critical thinking capabilities as well as supporting them to gain imaginative powers. So, reading habit serves as an important mean to gain information and knowledge, development of cognitive abilities, personal traits and understanding of an individual as well. Reading is considered as a source of obtaining new knowledge and is occupied with continuous understanding of individual's abilities. Moreover, reading habits seems to be differing with different age groups as of difference in their attention, interests, aptitude and varying circumstances (Ozbay, 2006).

In order to make educational process smoother, there is a great need of improvement in reading habits so as to enhance the learning. In the view of Scales and Rhee (2001), reading habits and patterns are being predicted by the gender, race and educational background of individuals. There is great correlation between reading satisfaction and reading propensity i.e. forcing an individual to read something he doesn't want to read would not be constructive. So, it is essential to have an observation of one's reading preferences in order to develop their reading habits for future learning.

Reading habits of youth are diminishing nowadays and the reason behind this fact are television, cell phones, videos, computer games and other negative ways of entertainment which play a contributory role to such worsen situation. The reading habits of individuals are being influenced by their personal, social, educational, economical and occupational backgrounds (Hopper, 2005). In Pakistan, there are many social aspects contributing to the decline in reading habits of students. Even the educational institutes have not become successful in promoting the reading habits of students. There are several reasons behind this but the main one is lack of importance given to the reading habits of students at early ages. This study aims to investigate the factors that are influential in developing and promoting the reading habits amongst students.

Literature Review:

In college and university, effective study has become critical. Useful study is essential and helps to promote reading. Students are found different in their study habits. Boys and girls have unusual attitudes towards reading habits. Everyone learns something daily but studying requires hard work. Siebert (2008) says that three considerations may be useful in developing good reading habits:

1. Set up a schedule for studying

A student who makes better use of his time to read regularly proves to be a successful reader with comparison to other students who do not screen their time to read. If someone waits for exams to study then his views would not be as clear as a student who read regularly according to a schedule. It is important to assign specific time, duration and breaks during study. This process restores your concentration to study again. Try to break up your major tasks into smaller one so that you can handle your time schedule for study.

2. Find a place to study

Suitable place is necessary for better reading. Find a place without any kind of noise, disruption and interruption. Some people have a habit to read while watching TV or listening music but majority of people like to read in a peaceful atmosphere. It can be useful to find out such a peaceful place for study.

3. Reward your studying

It is difficult to make a routine for study. It's a long term process to make a habit of reading. At first, one should motivate oneself for some kind of reward after reading a book. It helps you for further study. After motivation,

set your goals to read and read until it becomes a strong habit. Generally, we study when we want to get some kind of information for instance test, exams etc. Some students deceive themselves to show that they are reading but they are doing nothing more than looking busy. There are many useful strategies to enhance reading habits; some of them are described by Robinson (2009) in his SQ3R: it includes five steps such as survey, question, read, recite and review.

- **Survey:** Before starting your reading, take a fleeting look to the headings of the material you are going to read and try to get a general idea of the material. Make an effort to recognize the different parts of material. It is better to understand the outline to get the main theme of the material. In this way, you can arrange the information you are going to read.
- **Question:** After getting general idea, move to one section at a time and try to make a heading of the material and create question to keep in mind the heading of the material. If the heading is 'brainstorming', your question can be what is brainstorming? It is helpful to get the main theme or summary of the material.
- **Read:** Then read only the particular part of the material in which you are looking for the answer of your question. You can reread the particular portion of the text to get the answer of your question. You can find other important information during reading while searching the answer of your question as well.
- **Recite:** You are able find out the answer of the key question now you are looking for. Loudly recite it. Try to use your own words to recognize the meaning of the selected portion. Don't move to the next portion until the selected portion is understood by you. You can also write the main points of the portion for later review. When you fully understand the first portion then move to the next one and follow the same process for next portion.
- **Review:** Here you have to recapitulate your memory with the help of key points. Try to repeat the questions without consulting the material now. This review strengthens your views about the main idea. It is also a way to build up association of your views about the main idea.

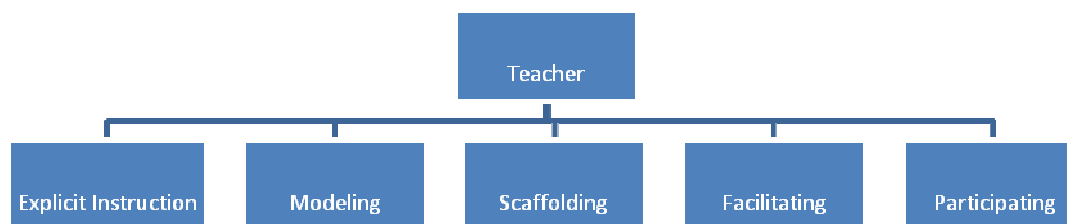
In short, this process helps to make your reading a fruitful habit. In this process, you can make changes according to your convenience e.g. you can select a paragraph to read in spite of selected portion of the material, effective ways of review help you to find the things you are trying to approach and building up the main idea of the text or material.

Reading serves both congenial and purposeful function through discussion and actions in daily life. In order to develop reading habits amongst individuals, parents and teachers serve an important role. A teacher can influence students' attitudes, purposes, literacy choices and their commitment to live. Heathington (1996) argues about teacher's role:

- Teacher must be conscious of the verbal and non verbal ways of communication to students in reading. He should be responsive of the sense of value during reading and should be aware of all the important component of reading.
- A teacher promotes students attitudes towards reading activities. If he fails to promote these activities among students, he fails to get positive results. So he should endorse positive attitude to all students despite of sex, race and culture.
- A teacher knows best for his students. Teacher's decision for their students affects their lifelong reading habits. A teacher should have the power to take essential and good decision for their students. Right decision at right time makes it easy for students to proceed in reading further and it makes their reading and literacy activities pleasurable.
- Teacher should consult students, parents, and volunteers to plan reading activities by providing positive support.
- Teacher should have time to encourage students' reading and celebrate their achievements. These things provide a chance for students to do good in future also. This role allows a teacher to get better results of his work.
- Teacher discovers and applies a problem solving approach to recognize and deal with students needs. A teacher should take interest to promote the students' learning skills for developing good reading habits.
- A teacher should always prepare to identify and to find out tensions that hinder in developing good reading habits. He should manage time for it and should develop procedure, material, interaction and support for students.

Au and Raphael (2002) describe teacher's role according to the sequence of his responsibility in the following figure:

Figure 1: Sequence of teacher's responsibility



Source: Au and Raphael (2002) (Modified)

In this way, a teacher proves to be a coach to provide guidelines, model or presenter for students, a scaffold, facilitate his students according to their needs, interests and problems and himself participate in students' activities to promote their reading habits. A teacher develops a foundation from root to tip for better understanding of students.

Moreover, home is considered as a center of developing reading habits and attitudes among students at an early stage. Reading habits depends on a large extent on parent's attitudes, efforts and home circumstances. Parental contribution is an important part of developing reading habits among students. Ernst-Slavit, Han, and Wenger (2004) say that parents are the first teachers of their children but the collaboration of both parent and teachers are necessary for students' reading habits. Parents do their work on their side at home and teachers do their work in school accordingly. Parents of diverse students are failed to provide appropriate facilities to their children. Students are different in their home environment, cultures, values and literacy practices. All these factors affect students leaning achievements. Parental attitude and home environment proves to be a base for students in developing good reading habits. When a child enters in school, he finds a new environment but a child who is supported by his parents in a good home environment and background is ready to accept this challenge. In Pakistan, mostly parents are not able to provide an ideal environment to their children because of inability, poor resources, lack of management and poor family background and the result is that their children proves to be diverse learners.

Greaney (1996) speaks about parental influences on students reading that are: Lack of appropriate material, inability of parents to purchase reading material, lack of space and light, number of daily household tasks, child labor practices. The same problems reflect in Pakistan also.

According to Padak, Sapin and Ackerman (2004), parents can work with their children in the form of playing games and reading books that will encourage a child learning. They can take field trips to a farm, park, library and factory to clear the concepts of their children about these things and to explore the community means and resources. Parents can involve their children in various situations to give them a lesson about some real life situation.

In the same way, Bus (2003) says that parent's attitude directly influence on children's reading habits because they can better engage their children in reading and make their children able to maintain their level of interest about book reading. So, parents should be aware of the usefulness of reading if they don't like reading as source of knowledge, they can't understand how reading habit can be made significant and pleasant for their children. Parents must create close and friendly atmosphere with their children so that they can share things and experiences together.

However, parents can engage their children in reading successfully when they find ways to provide pleasure and finish the gap between books and children. Parents can explain the pictorial details, complex contents and linguistic difficulties which create problems for children more effectively. They prove to be a hub for their children in building up their reading habits. So, parents and teachers play an important role in developing the reading habits amongst children. This present study attempts to determine the role of parents and teachers in promoting the reading habits amid individuals.

Research Method:

This study is aimed at exploring the factors that contributes to promote the reading habits of students in Pakistan using the descriptive survey method. Data was collected from three public universities of Pakistan named University of the Punjab Lahore, Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan and The Islamia University of Bahawalpur. All the students enrolled in Masters' programs were the population of the study. Information regarding departments of each university was taken from their official website. The sample for the study included one thousand and fifty students. The distribution of sample is as follows:

Table 1: Distribution of Sample

University	Total departments	Respondents/department	Total students
University of the Punjab, Lahore	48	10	480
Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan	28	10	280
The Islamia University of Bahawalpur	29	10	290
Total	105	30	1050

The data was collected from the sample with the help of a questionnaire that was consisted of 10 questions along with the demographics of the respondents. Each question was having 4-6 options for the answer. The questionnaire was personally administered by the researcher to the entire sample. The response rate was 96.57% as 1014 questionnaires were received out of 1050 questionnaires. In order to analyze the data, the researcher used Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software while crosstabs was applied on the data in order to determine the factors that contribute in promoting the reading habits of students. To make things easier to understand, the results were interpreted in percentages.

Results:

This study was focused on recognizing the factors that are helpful in promoting the reading habits amongst the students in public universities of Pakistan. The results of this research are being presented below:

Table 2: Major objectives of study

Options	University of the Punjab, Lahore	Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan	The Islamia University of Bahawalpur
To increase knowledge	50.8%	59.3%	61.4%
To pass examination	31.3%	28.6%	21.4%
To develop personality	13.5%	6.4%	11.0%
To do research	2.5%	2.9%	3.8%
Any other	1.9%	2.9%	2.4%

According to the table 2, the major objective of the university students is to increase the knowledge. More than 50% of students of the public universities have agreed to the view that they mostly read in order to increase their knowledge.

Table 3: Getting help to read other than teacher

Options	University of the Punjab, Lahore	Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan	The Islamia University of Bahawalpur
Father	36.5	35	33.1
Mother	25.2	26.8	18.6
Brother	9.6	3.2	9.3
Sister	2.1	4.6	2.8
Grandparents	.2	1.8	.7
Friends	23.3	23.6	30
Any Other	3.1	5	5.5

According to Table 3, majority of the students i.e. approximately 35% students gets help from their father if they need any help in reading other than their teacher while they get least help from their grandparents in reading.

Table 4: Source of getting books

Options	University of the Punjab, Lahore	Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan	The Islamia University of Bahawalpur
Parents	3.1	5.7	3.1
Friends	8.5	5.7	12.1
Bookshops	22.5	17.5	14.8
Rental library	.2	3.2	2.4
Public library	1.9	0	3.4
University library	62.7	65.7	62.4
Any other	1	2.1	1.7

Table 4 shows that the major source of getting books is university library and more than 62% students agrees that they consult university library if they need books.

Table 5: Motivation to consult public library

Options	University of the Punjab, Lahore	Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan	The Islamia University of Bahawalpur
Parents	7.9	5	7.9
Friends	14.2	8.9	16.6
Teachers	23.3	18.6	21
Examinations	12.1	5.7	8.3
No one	42.5	61.8	46.2

According to Table 5, when students were asked about who motivates them to consult public library, almost 50% of the students replies that no one motivates them. They did it on their own will.

Table 6: Family members' encouragement to read

Options	University of the Punjab, Lahore	Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan	The Islamia University of Bahawalpur
Father	79.2	81.8	83.1
Mother	85.2	80.4	81.4
Brother	58.1	50.7	61.7
Sister	50.8	56.8	61.4
Grandfather	15.6	18.6	32.4
Grandmother	17.3	21.4	30.3

Table 6 shows that mother and father encourage their children to read alot than any other family member while the least encouragement comes from grandparents.

Table 7: Family members' read at home

Options	University of the Punjab, Lahore	Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan	The Islamia University of Bahawalpur
Father	31.5	16.8	27.9
Mother	29	15	21.7
Brother	61	51.8	50.7
Sister	59.8	53.2	51
Grandfather	12.9	11.8	15.5
Grandmother	10.6	10	11

According to Table 7, brother and sister amongst all family members read more at home while grandmother read any sort of material at home the least.

Table 8: Number of books available at home

Options	University of the Punjab, Lahore	Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan	The Islamia University of Bahawalpur
None	3.8	3.9	7.2
1-10	13.8	15.7	14.8
11-50	40.2	45.4	47.1
51-100	25.6	24.6	24.8
101-150	4.8	3.6	1.4
200+	11.9	6.8	10

Table 8 shows the number of books available at home other than the textbooks. Majority of the students of the universities stated that the number of books available at their home ranges from 11-50.

Table 9: Help to increase reading habits

Options	University of the Punjab, Lahore	Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan	The Islamia University of Bahawalpur
Interest	56.9	49.6	57.9
Availability of books	5.2	6.1	8.3
Parents' encouragement	.8	9.3	5.2
Teachers' encouragement	5.4	3.6	7.6
Compulsory reading	.6	2.9	2.8
Availability of variety of books	22.7	25.7	17.9
Frequent fresh arrivals	.2	2.5	.3
More public libraries	8.1	.4	0

According to Table 9, interest is the major factor that helps to increase the reading habits of students. While availability of variety of books also serve as 2nd important factor to increase the reading habits of students.

Table 10: Decision about books to read

Options	University of the Punjab, Lahore	Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan	The Islamia University of Bahawalpur
Recommended by teachers	35.4%	46.1%	48.6%
Recommended by parents	2.1	.4	3.1
Recommended by friends	16.7	3.2	2.8
Self-interest	44.4	49.6	44.1
Any other	1.5	.7	1.4

Table 10 shows the decision of students about which book to read. Almost two fourth of the students of the universities stated that they read the books of their self-interest while the students also read the books that are recommended by their teachers.

Discussion and conclusion:

Reading serves as an important source of obtaining knowledge and helps in developing the critical thinking capabilities of an individual. These reading habits must be developed from home that helps the children in their kindergarten and primary classes (Bus, 2003). The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the factors that help in promoting the reading habits of students. These findings are consistent with the research of Ernst-Slavit, Han, and Wenger (2004) that states parents serve as first teachers of their kids but this is also a fact that teamwork of both parents and teachers is important in promoting the reading habits of students.

It is concluded from the study that both parents and teachers play an important role in promoting the reading habits. The foremost factor that is evident from this study is the interest of students that make them study more. They mostly study in order to enhance their knowledge. In the absence of teachers, parents help their children in their study especially the father as the mother is busy in doing home chores but still she tries to help their children. Both mother and father encourage their children to read a lot. Students also get motivation to read more from their siblings also as they study a lot at home. Along with the self-interest of students to read any sort of material, students also read books that are recommended by their teachers. Although this study has some limitations as the data is taken from the institutes of Punjab, it still gives insight knowledge of factors that are influential in promoting the reading habits of students in Pakistan. It is recommended on the basis of findings that both parents and teachers should work in collaboration to develop interest of students to read healthy material. Along with this, libraries should also be equipped with numerous sort of electronic and printed material as more than 50% students consult libraries to get reading material.

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