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AN ASSESSMENT OF TEXT READING HABITS OF PAKISTANI
M.PHIL.LEVELSTUDENTS

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Abstract

Reading can play a vital role in personality development. No one can neglect its importance. But recent trends show that students' priorities are changing overtime, and they are interested more in social media, entertainment, and reading novels. The purpose of reading is specific to them. Reading can make students optimistic and ambitious about their dreams. It is crucial to learn the easy and effective ways of reading at the university level because university level study is different from school and college level. University M.Phil. level requires various forms and patterns of reading to achieve excellent grades. This study attempts to analyze the reading habit of students at a leading public university in Multan city. The purpose of the study is to measure the reading habits of M.Phil. Level students by percentage in the Economics department. It is a case study in which a questionnaire was applied to collect data from the Economics Department of Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan, Pakistan. A sample size of 30 respondents at M.Phil. level was used to collect the data from the Economics Department of the University. The findings of the study showed poor reading habits among the students while their interest was high towards social media, using the internet, and other activities. They like to read novels and other reading stuff instead of reading course books.

INTRODUCTION

Reading is an important task of learning. It is a primary source of information and a tool for gaining knowledge. This language skill also develops the cognitive and intellectual thinking of a person. The reading tells the difference between good and bad. Also, it is a communication between the writer and the reader itself. It tells about the thinking and ideas of others. It not only changes our mind but our soul. Reading is helpful if a person reads with a receptive mind, his reading must have a purpose, and it is meaningful (Ur, 1996). Without reading, a person will be unable to know about others' ideas and sharing (Schaller, 2016). It is not only essential for future development, but also it is necessary to keep yourself up to date with knowledge. Reading helps increase the analytical and reasoning skills of students, so its importance cannot be neglected. Nowadays, the purpose of reading for students is specific rather than to get knowledge, but reading is an informative source and the best activity for leisure time. Reading habit is crucial in building up a person's future (Simisaye & Quadri, 2010). Reading helps increase the vocabulary and overall knowledge of an individual.

Reading is important for youth and their mental and intellectual abilities. The progress of any country depends on the literacy rate, so reading is necessary to accelerate the literacy ratio of a nation. The development of a country's education factor is significant, and there is a need to improve educational qualities in listening, writing, speaking, and reading because all are interconnected. Text reading is essential in developing mental and intellectual thinking and enhancing

thinking (Aloqaili, 2012). A variety of text reading helps a person to know about the world and in knowing multidiscipline. It is the best way which allows a person to get a job and in achieving a respectable place in society.

Most students take economics as a complicated subject, so there must be some defined reading strategies for them to understand it and have command of this subject. Economics subject is important, especially when the interest of the student is towards knowing about the Economy. This study aims to investigate the reading habits of Pakistani M. Phil level students in the Department of Economics at Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan.

BACKGROUND

2.1 Review of Literature

In this section, we will discuss the reviews of various related researches based on the reading. Palani (2012) conducted a study on promoting reading habits and creating a literate society. He highlighted the methods and benefits of improving the reading habits of people. He found reading an important activity in learning and overall well-being and improvement of society. In his study, he also explained the reading techniques to improve reading skills. He discussed the role and importance of reading in human mental and intellectual development and the country, and nation's progress. Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2014) examined the reading habits of students and their effects on academic performance. He found a positive relationship between students' performance and their reading habits. He also suggested that students at M. Phil level should visit the library frequently to enhance their reading skills. The objectives were to find out the students reading habits to check the effects of reading on academic performance and the reasons for reading any material. He highlighted the trend of pupils towards notes reading and visits to the library was found exceptionally low among students. He found 62.5% of students think that reading is vital, 75% read only to pass their exam, and the textbook reading ratio was only 3.0%. Cushenbery (1983) has researched helping children in developing reading competency for the modern era of life. The study explained the social factors necessary to increase reading competency, relevant skills for effective reading, and the importance of reading to build up a competitive life. Cunningham and Stanovich (1998) highlighted the importance of reading by defining reading theories and the consequences of different degrees of reading. They had found that students must get attention towards reading at an early stage so that they become habitual of reading. Their reading experience should enhance to build their intellectual and mental abilities. Akanda, Hoq, and Hasan (2013) have surveyed students' reading habit in social sciences and arts. They find out the poor reading habit in students their interest was more towards media entertainment programs, and the purpose of reading for them was specific. They had provided the reading suggestions for the students to improve their reading skills. They had highlighted the reading habits that it was not the practice of a short time but a lifetime practice. In their paper,

they found the interest of students for social media rather than on educational activities. Maccoby (2000) has pointed out the parenting effects on children reading and misreading habits and found a significant impact on reading because parents' influence is unyielding in the behavior of children. Alley (2012) defined the impact of reading achievement on a standardized test and concluded that reading skills are fundamental for academic career and success. Reading is interrelated with the educational achievements and in the success and performance of a student. Academic performance of the students who prefer reading was quite high-level. Benwari and Nemine (2014) have highlighted the intensive reading habits of students of Economics on their academic achievements. The impact of intensive reading and school assignments and homework was found significant in the academic performance of students. Students should guide about reading strategies so that they could achieve good score and can build an efficient reading habits throughout the life. Cullinan (2000) has researched independent reading and school achievement and found its positive effect on the learning process; he had also highlighted the importance of independent reading in a student's life. Lukhele (2013) has examined a relation between reading attitude, abilities, and academic performance among primary teachers in Switzerland and found a significant relationship between students' reading ability and academic performance while the relation between reading attitude and ability was poor. Chinnasamy (1998) has conducted a study on newspaper reading and found a positive trend towards newspaper reading among students. 79.6% of students visit the library for reading and the time spent on news reading was 1-2 hours daily. The study found that newspaper reading is necessary for improving general knowledge and overall mental and intellectual development of a person. Hermida (2009) has explained the importance of teaching academic reading skills and found the surface approach to reading mostly used in academic and a need of teachers for the suitable teaching of reading skills. In the study surface approach was found most popular among the students and it was also suggested that teachers should guide students so that they could know the effective reading strategies. Oueini, Bahous, and Nabhani (2008) have examined the impact of reading aloud in the classroom and found that students' participation in read aloud discussion is helpful in enhancing the confidence and their analysis capability. Huang, Capps, Blacklock, and Garza (2014) have conducted research on reading habits of college level students. Findings show that 7.72 hours students spend on academic reading, 4.24 hours for extracurricular reading and 8.95 hours they spent for the internet. Cimmiyotti (2013) analyzed the impact of reading on academic performance and they based reading on three components including fluency vocabulary and comprehension and found correlation between these variables. Ukoha (2015) has analyzed the impact of writing on reading and found that reading and writings are interrelated and move in the same direction. Students can improve their reading qualities with the help of writing skills. Fayaz Ahmad Loan (2011) has researched the reading habit of rural and urban college students and found that reading habit was more developed in urban students than rural areas college students. Akabuike and Asika (2012) have investigated the reading habits of undergraduates & their academic performance and found that the student's

purpose was to read only to pass their exam, not to get knowledge. Awais and Ameen (2013) have examined the reading preferences of primary students. They found that students prefer to read the material published locally and like adventure stuff to read, so they suggested that there must be a positive role of local print media in children's development. Akarsu and Daryemez (2014) have explained the reading habits of university students studying English language and literature in the digital age and found that students are interested in social media, songs, videos, and other entertainment fields with less attention towards reading habits. Vandenhoeck (2013a) conducted research on the screen reading habits among university-level students and concluded that there is a need for teachers' guide to developing student's interest in reading. Cambria and Guthrie (2010) have researched motivating and engaging students in reading and define skills and reading as interrelated. Johnson and Blair (2003) explored the importance of reading in an elementary curriculum and highlighted students' self-selected study in their development. Annamalai, Muniandy, and Samsudin (2014) found that students' reading interest was weak, and students prefer technology for reading. Polytechnic students find difficulty in reading, and they felt technology more exciting. Issa, Aliyu, Akangbe, and Adedeji (2012a) have researched the reading habits of federal polytechnic students and found that the reading habit was poor. They highlighted the factors which were a hurdle for the students in the way of reading. Environmental and social factors were responsible for developing reading habits among students. Students liked to read only their textbook notes and lecture material. Further, the visit of the library was only just for a few times as most of them were not frequent user of library for reading. Gilbert and Fister (2011) have analyzed the reading habit of college students, and they had found that interest in reading among students was high, and they enjoy reading not only for academic purpose but also for gaining knowledge. Mishra and Yadav (2013) have conducted research on reading habits of students and found that there is a need to guide and encourage students, and this task is not only of parents but also of teachers and librarians and provide the students with the material which is of their own interest.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study is based on primary data analysis. The students of Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan city in Pakistan, surveyed the department of Economics. In the Economics department, the total numbers of enrolled Ph.D. students were 12. In MPhil, the number of students was 64, including the Business Economics discipline and Pure Economics. In the MBE program, the total enrolled students were 55. A sample size of 30 students was used. The data was collected from the students of M.Phil. Economics program, including 15 males and 15 females. Thirty copies of questionnaires were distributed. The respondents filled the questionnaire and returned all the copies adequately.

FINDINGS

The response of the students to all questions is as follow:

Table 1: What is your favorite branch of Economics?

Favorite branch of Economics	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Microeconomics	8	26.67
Macro Economics	6	20
Development Economics	8	26.67
International Economics	5	16.66
Public Finance	3	10
Research & Development	0	0
Total	30	100 %

There were different trends for the favorite branch of Economics. Eight respondents favored the Microeconomics branch, and the same ratio was for Development economics (26.6%). Students like the Macro Economics branch with 20%, International Economics with 16.6 percent, for Public Finance, the ratio was 10 percent, and their trend for the branch of Research and Development was zero.

Table 2: Which branch of Economics is difficult?

Difficult branch of Economics	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Mathematical Economics	6	20
Econometrics	14	46.67
Managerial Economics	3	10
Monetary Economics	7	23.33
Total	30	100 %

Students found Econometrics' reading as the most challenging branch of Economics as the percentage for Econometrics was 46.67, which was high compared to other economics branches. At the same time, Monetary Economics was also a thorny branch for students with 23.33 rates. They said they also had difficulties reading for economic terms. The percentage was 23.33 for Managerial Economics, and in Mathematical, it was 20%. The reason was challenging vocabulary in Managerial Economics and Mathematical & statistical symbols in the Mathematical branch for reading comprehension.

Table 3: Why have you selected Economics as a subject?

Reason to select Economics	Respondents	Percentage (%)
• To get a job	7	23.33
• Due to its popularity	7	23.33
• Due to your interest	14	46.67
• Someone suggested	2	6.67
Total	30	100 %

Students had selected Economics due to their interest, as the highest percentage was 46.67. It was due to their reading habits of Economics since they had been the students at higher secondary and bachelor students of Economics. While the ratio to study Economics was due to its popularity among them, they read and understood this subject since they had been the students at school for Home Economics. Also, reading newspapers gave them a good idea to get a job after M. Phil Economics was found equal. In contrast, 6.67 percent of students followed their parents' suggested way that M.Phil students quickly obtain employment in Pakistan.

Table 4: What kind of books you like to read?

Kind of books like to read	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Course Books	3	10
Historical Books	8	26.67
Islamic Books	4	13.33
Scientific Books	7	23.33
Poetry/Novels	8	26.67
Total	30	100 %

Students like to read Historical and Poetry/ Novels with the same percentage while the trend of course books reading was deplorable with 10%, which was extremely low compared to other types of books, for scientific books the percentage was 23.33.

Table 5: What is your reading habit?

Reading Habit	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Daily	12	40
Weekly	8	26.67
Last night before the exam	10	33.33
Total	30	100 %

Most students liked to read daily with 40 percent. The ratio of students who wanted to read before the exam was 33.33 percent, and those who liked to read weekly basis was 26.67 percent.

Table 6: What you prefer to do in your leisure time?

Preference in leisure time	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Sports	10	33.33
Mobile Use	10	33.33
Book Reading	2	6.67
Net Surfing	8	26.67
Total	30	100 %

Students preferred to use mobile and spend their time on sports, and the ratio of both activities was equal to 33.33 percentages. While the ratio for net surfing was 26.67 percent, and the trend towards book reading was very low as it was only 6.67 percent.

Table 7: For which purpose you use the net?

Purpose of net use	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Social Media	14	46.67
Videos	6	20
Songs	3	10
Movies	7	23.33
Total	30	100 %

Most of the students like to spend their time using social media, as the percentage was 46.67. The percentage of watching videos was 20%. From movies, it was 23.33 percent, 10 percent of students use the net for songs. Overall, social media was a high reading search engine for students.

Table 8: What is your favorite mode of Reading?

Favorite mode of Reading	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Book Reading	16	53.33
Notes Reading	8	26.67
Online Reading	2	6.67
Recommended Book Reading	4	13.33
Total	30	100 %

The favorite mode of reading for students was reading from books with 53.33 percent, and for notes reading ratio was 26.67, while the trend towards online reading was deplorable as it was 6.66 percent.

Table 9: What you search more on the net?

Top searching on the net	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Social Media	9	30
Songs	7	23.33
Videos	8	26.67
Movies	6	20
Total	30	100 %

Many students who search social media more on social media was 30%, net, while the percentage for videos and songs searching was 26.67% and 23.33%, respectively. For movies, the percentage was 20.

Table 10: What is your favorite area of interest?

The favorite area of interest	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Politics	5	16.67
Economy	4	13.33
Sports	2	6.66
Fashion/Grooming	14	46.67
History	5	16.67
Total	30	100 %

The trend towards fashion reading was remarkably high with 46.67 while interest in politics and history reading was found equal with the percentage of 16.67, reading for sports the rate was 6.66.

Table 11: How much time you spend reading?

Time spend on reading	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 hour	15	50
1-2 hour	1	3.33
2-3 hour	0	0
No fix time	14	46.67
Total	30	100 %

Students like to read for less than 1 hour, and students who read at irregular intervals were almost the same in ratio. Most pupils showed their interest in reading for a short time.

Table 12: Your preferred job?

Preferred job	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Government Job	13	43.33
Private Job	6	20
Online Job	0	0
Abroad	11	36.67
Total	30	100 %

Almost all the students' reading was revolving around finding a government or a private job. The students showing interest in newspaper and journal reading in getting government jobs were 43.33 percent of the total; the ratio for reading causes for jobs abroad was 36.67 percent, which was also a high ratio. Only 20% of students were interested in reading for information on a private-sector job.

Table 13: Your interested field is?

Interested field	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Teaching	10	33.33
Banking	14	46.67
Industry/Executive	6	20
Total	30	100%

Most students in the Economics department liked to adopt the Banking field. They were reading banking-related material as a profession with 46.67%, and the ratio for the teaching profession was also significant, with 33.33 percent. It was because of the attractive teaching position offers in Pakistan that these students often read Economics related teaching job advertisements and how post-MPhil students in Economics share their job experience on different printed material forums in Pakistan. This reading was attracted to those who wanted to adopt Economics as a teaching profession. Twenty percent of students wanted to work in the industry, or executive type jobs, which was their interest in reading course materials and online reading of position adds in executive employment.

Table 14: Which factors encourage you to read?

Factors encourage reading	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Your Own Interest	18	60
Family pressure	6	20
Societal factors	0	0
Academic performance	6	20
Total	30	100 %

A factor that encouraged the students to read was their interest with the percentage of 60 and family pressure. Academic performance was an equal factor with 20 percent, which enable them to read.

Table 15: For what you read the newspapers?

Purpose of reading newspaper	Respondents	Percentage (%)
General Knowledge	12	40
Current Affairs	9	30
Pakistan Affairs	3	10
Economic Updates	4	13.33
Country Updates	2	6.67
Total	30	100 %

Many students (40%) ticked that they used to read the newspaper for general knowledge, for which percentage was 40 percent. However, 30 percent of students read the newspaper to get information about current affairs, while reading for country update purposes was 6.67%.

DISCUSSION

After analyzing the results, the study can be interpreted as follow:

Students had opted for Economics subjects based on their interests. Most students found difficulty in Econometrics, while Microeconomics and Development Economics was their fascinating field of Economics, which they like to read.

Students like to spend a short time reading. They showed a low interest for a long time reading. Students wanted to read less than an hour. No one liked to read more than two to three hours. Many of the students were reading for a short time, which was according to their interest. No one wanted to read for a long time.

Students like to read historical and novels/ poetry-based books rather than reading course books. While the factors that encourage them for reading were their interest and for some students, it was due to family pressure and academic performance.

Social media, videos, and trends in watching movies were high as compared to educational activities. They like to spend their leisure time net surfing and mobile using rather than reading, so there is a need to develop reading habits. Students spend most of the time on the net, and in net surfing, their interest in the academic search was relatively low compared to other explored activities.

The purpose of reading a newspaper was for general knowledge, and the reading habit of most students was regular daily. Overall, students' habit of text reading was specific to achieve a particular goal, not general. Generally, their interest in text reading was insufficient. To

summarize, the students had a high interest in reading for social media and other entertainments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Students' reading habits depend on their preferred activities, which are changing rapidly; for example, they like to spend most of their time on internet surfing and social media activities. Their interest is exceedingly high in games, songs, and movies. Here are some suggestions for improving their text reading habits.

M.Phil. university teachers should guide their students in developing their reading habits in enhancing their interest in text reading in the subject of Economics as per the need of their M. Phil course. There should be workshops on reading habits to motivate university students. It will help them improve their educational score and the overall development of reading comprehension (Akabuike & Asika, 2012; Rajab & Al-Sadi, 2015). There is a need to develop text reading habits in students at an elementary level, and in this way, parents can guide them very well. Parents and teachers should not force them to read any particular material and read stuff they like to read (Issa, Aliyu, Akangbe, & Adedeji, 2012b; F.A. Loan, 2011). Moreover, there is a need for future research on this issue concerning M. Phil level students leading to Ph.D. studies (Akarsu & Daryemez, 2014; Vandenhoeck, 2013b).

CONCLUSION

The results of the study show that majority of the students like historical and novels/poetry reading. The trend toward text reading was shallow. Students spent less than an hour for text reading, and even the ratio of students who read with no fixed time was also equal. It was observed that many students liked to read every day while they wanted to spend their leisure time in sports and mobile use. Students wanted to read the newspaper for general knowledge, and they liked to read by their interest. The purpose of text reading is specific, not general. Students wanted to read books as compared to read with notes and other study material of reading. Most students opted for Economics subject due to their interest. The text reading habits in students were found inadequate while the trend towards other activities like social media, sports, novels/poetry reading was high compared to reading course books. It is an alarming situation, and there is a need to give proper attention to text reading and train students from a fundamental level to develop the text reading habit. Reading is necessary either through text reading or any other helping material. No one can neglect its importance, and it has many benefits in the development of a person.

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