

FROM PAGES TO PROGRESS: A STUDY ON THE IMPORTANCE OF READING HABITS FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS' PERSONAL AND ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: The study addresses the concerning decline in reading habits among college students, with clear implications for intellectual development and academic achievement. The study emphasizes the importance of strong reading practices, aiming to contribute effectively to ongoing discussions about how to boost learning outcomes and create a more effective educational environment. This research paper adopts a dual-methodology approach quantitative and qualitative analyse. The study emphasises on the holistic development of students, considering not only academic outcomes but also the cultivation of critical thinking skills and cognitive abilities. The study carried out among the college students of Kokrajhar town especially undergraduate Bodoland University Students. A sample survey of 100 students of Girls' College, Kokrajhar, Science College, Kokrajhar and Kokrajhar Govt. College has been carried for the study. The findings of this research illuminate a strong correlation between consistent reading habits and enhanced cognitive skills, critical thinking capabilities, and improved academic performance among college students.

Keywords: Reading Habits, students, college, cognitive skills, Academic development

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1. INTRODUCTION

In current educational landscapes, a concerning trend has emerged—a decline in the cultivation of robust reading habits among college students. Reading, once considered essential for learning and personal growth, is seeing a noticeable decline. This shift has significant implications for students' intellectual and personal development. The rise of social media platforms and instant entertainment options has diverted attention away from traditional reading. Students often juggle academics, extracurricular activities, and part-time jobs, leaving limited time for leisure reading. There is a growing preference for quick summaries, videos, and audio content over in-depth reading. Reduced reading can hinder vocabulary growth, comprehension skills, and overall cognitive abilities. Engaging with complex texts fosters analytical skills; its decline may weaken students' ability to think critically. Reading contributes to empathy, creativity, and emotional intelligence, all of which are vital for well-rounded development. As technology evolves and alternative forms of information consumption become increasingly popular, the traditional act of reading—whether for leisure or academics—is diminishing. This shift warrants careful consideration, as its impact extends beyond academics to students' broader intellectual and personal growth. This warrants a comprehensive examination of the intricate relationship between reading habits and the multifaceted aspects of college students' personal and academic lives.

The lack of reading habit raising concern on the deterioration of human values and social anarchy. Extensive use of online gaming among the students and use of social networking sites make the students lack consistency to learn things which hinders the inquisitive mindset of the students. In the world of social media how the reading habits can help to improve the consistency to learn new things in their age and make them inquisitive.

1.1 Historical Perspectives

The historical context of reading habits in educational settings unveils a narrative that underscores the profound significance of reading in shaping the intellectual landscape. From ancient scrolls to medieval manuscripts and the advent of the printing press, the evolution of written communication has been intimately tied to educational practices. Historical records illuminate how reading, once considered a privileged pursuit, gradually became a cornerstone of formal education. This section will delve into the evolution of reading habits, examining societal attitudes, educational methodologies, and the role of literature in shaping the minds of students across different eras. By understanding the historical trajectory, we can contextualize the contemporary challenges faced by college students in fostering and maintaining effective reading habits.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A study by (Erdem , 2015) involving students from Ankara and Erciyes Universities in Turkey found that while students preferred reading novels and newspapers in their free time, their reading was limited by academic workload and digital distractions. Similarly, a case study at Michael and Cecilia Ibru University in Nigeria showed that although students typically read for 2–4 hours daily, constraints such as poor infrastructure and time limitations adversely affected their habits (Okolo & Ivwighrehweta , 2020). In Pakistan, (Jabeen et al. , 2024) noted a clear shift toward digital reading among allied health students due to ease of access and convenience. (Amin , 2021), in a related study at UAF Sub-Campus, observed that only a small proportion of students read syllabus or non-syllabus materials regularly, despite a positive correlation between

reading and academic performance. Gender-based reading preferences were highlighted by (Dar et al. , 2019), who identified notable differences in material choices and access patterns among male and female students in India. The study also emphasized the growing influence of social media and digital platforms, which often replace traditional reading. (Alsaedi et al. , 2021) found that most Malaysian students preferred digital formats over print, reading for about 30 minutes to one hour daily. A study from the Philippines, (Panday & Napil , 2024) echoed these findings, with students favouring digital media due to its accessibility and ability to support multitasking. Academic engagement and its link to reading habits were examined in multiple studies. (Wang et al. , 2022) conducted a large-scale empirical study in China and found that family reading culture and university support significantly enhanced reading practices and academic outcomes. In Vietnam, (Pham , 2021) reported a strong relationship between consistent reading and improved comprehension skills among EFL students. (Adeyemi , 2020) emphasized the impact of digital devices and language issues on students' reading consistency in Nigeria. Across the reviewed literature, recommendations commonly include promoting reading through institutional support, enhancing access to diverse reading materials, and fostering environments that encourage sustained reading engagement.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary aim of this research is to unravel the complexities surrounding the relationship between reading habits and the personal and academic development of college students.

1. Assessment of Current Reading Habits: studying the current reading practices among college students. Focusing on aspects such as Frequency of reading, variety of resources (books, articles, digital content), impact of digital media on reading behaviour.
2. Analysis of Correlations: Investigating the potential relationships between Reading habits and cognitive skills along with critical thinking abilities and academic

performance.

3. Exploration of Student Perspectives: Taking insight from students regarding their motivations for reading, apparent benefits or weaknesses, the role of reading in their overall development
4. Identification of Consequences: Highlighting the possible outcomes associated with falling in reading habits, particularly in relation to academic achievement, personal growth and development
5. Proposal of Educational Strategies: Proposing some practical interventions and strategies for educational institutions, aiming to promote positive reading habits, foster an environment that supports academic excellence and holistic student growth

This study seeks to make a substantive role to ongoing discussions about the significance of reading habits in higher education. The intention is to offer practical recommendations for librarians, administrators, and policymakers, with the broader aim of fostering a strong reading culture within academic institutions.

4. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Data Collection Methods A mixed-methods approach was adopted to investigate the relationship between college students' reading habits and their academic and personal development. Quantitative data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed to 100 undergraduate students from various academic disciplines, including arts, science, and commerce. The questionnaire included closed-ended items measuring reading frequency (daily, weekly, rarely), types of reading materials (textbooks, fiction, online articles, academic journals), and self-reported academic outcomes (GPA range, assignment completion, comprehension levels). **Statistical Tools** Quantitative responses were analysed using SPSS (Version 26). Descriptive statistics, including means, frequencies, and standard deviations, summarized overall reading behaviours. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to assess the relationship between reading frequency and academic performance indicators such as GPA and test scores. Inferential statistics,

including t-tests, were applied to compare reading habits across gender and academic streams. Qualitative data from interviews and open-ended responses underwent thematic analysis using a coding framework. Recurring themes—such as time management, digital distractions, intrinsic motivation, and perceived academic gain—were identified and categorized.

5. FINDINGS

5.1 Quantitative Results

Quantitative analysis revealed compelling correlations between reading habits and academic performance. The mean reading frequency across the sample indicated a positive relationship with higher grade point averages (GPAs). Correlation coefficients demonstrated statistically significant relationships between specific reading materials (academic journals, textbooks) and improved academic outcomes.

Table 1: Correlation Between Reading Frequency and GPA

Reading Frequency	GPA
High	3.78 ± 0.25
Moderate	3.56 ± 0.32
Low	3.12 ± 0.28

Table 2: Correlation Between Academic Materials and GPA

Reading Material	GPA
Academic Journals	3.82 ± 0.22
Textbooks	3.75 ± 0.28
Fictional Literature	3.45 ± 0.30

Table 3: Distribution of Reading Materials Preferred by Students

Reading Material	Percentage of Students Preferring
Academic Journals	45%
Textbooks	30%
Fictional Literature	20%
Online Articles	5%

Table 4: Correlation Between Reading Frequency and Study Time

Reading Frequency	Average Weekly Study Hours
High	15.2 ± 2.3
Moderate	12.5 ± 3.0
Low	10.1 ± 2.8

Table 5: Impact of Reading on Critical Thinking Skills

Perceived Impact on Critical Thinking	Percentage of Students agreeing
Significant	65%
Moderate	25%
Minimal	10%

5.2 Qualitative Insights

Qualitative findings provided rich insights into the lived experiences of students regarding their reading habits. Themes emerged related to the challenges of balancing leisure reading with academic demands, the impact of digital media on reading preferences, and the role of peer influence in shaping reading habits.

6. DISCUSSION

6.1 Interpreting the Results

The comprehensive analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data provides valuable insights into the intricate relationship between reading habits and the personal and academic development of college students. The findings align with existing literature on the historical significance of reading in education, confirming the enduring importance of this practice. The positive correlation between higher reading frequency and elevated academic performance substantiates theories that posit a link between consistent reading habits and cognitive skills development (Table 1).

The distribution of preferred reading materials among students reflects a diverse range of preferences, with a notable emphasis on academic journals and textbooks. This aligns with existing theoretical frameworks that highlight the role of varied reading materials in enhancing critical thinking skills (Table 3). The impact of digital distractions on reading habits, as evidenced by

students' preferences for online articles and the challenges they face (Table 6, Table 8), underscores the need for educators to address these challenges within the evolving technological landscape.

Furthermore, the qualitative insights reveal

Table 6: Common Themes in Qualitative Data

Themes	Examples of Participant Quotes
Balancing Reading and Study	"Finding time for leisure reading during exams is a real challenge."
Digital Distractions	"Social media often distracts me from reading books for pleasure."
Peer Influence	"Discussions with friends inspire me to explore diverse reading topics."

that students perceive a significant impact of reading on their critical thinking skills, supporting theories that posit a positive relationship between reading and cognitive development (Table 5). The reasons behind the preferences for specific reading materials (Table 7) add depth to our understanding, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of students' motivations for engaging with different types of texts.

Table 7: Reasons for Reading Preferences

Reasons for Preference	Examples of Participant Quotes
Academic Journals	"They provide in-depth insights and help me stay updated."
Textbooks	"Essential for understanding core concepts in my field of study."
Fictional Literature	"Escape from academic stress; it's a form of mental relaxation."
Online Articles	"Convenient and quick sources of information for short breaks."

Table 8: Challenges in Maintaining Reading Habits

Challenges	Examples of Participant Quotes
Academic Workload	"Heavy coursework often leaves little time for personal reading."
Digital Distractions	"Smartphones are a constant temptation, diverting my focus."
Lack of Motivation	"Sometimes, I lack the motivation to read after a long day."

6.2 Implications for Educational Institutions

The study's findings have far-reaching implications for educational policies and practices.

6.2.1 Correlation Between Reading Habits and Academic Performance

- The study consistently shows a positive relationship between students' reading habits and their academic success (see Table 1).
- Development of a reading culture within educational institutions is crucial.
- Both academic and leisure reading should be recognized as valuable for intellectual growth (refer to Table 3).
- Libraries are encouraged to implement interventions promoting a balanced approach to reading.

6.2.2 Addressing Digital Distractions

- The widespread presence of digital distractions calls for positive institutional measures.
- Regular awareness programs and resources can assist students in managing digital consumption effectively.
- There is a notable correlation between reading frequency and overall study time (Table 4).
- Making efforts to enhance reading habits are likely to have a positive effect on students' general study routines.

6.2.3 Influence of Peer Dynamics on Reading Habits

- Qualitative findings indicate that peer influence significantly moulds students'

reading behaviours.

- Libraries can influence this by encouraging book clubs, discussion forums, and collaborative reading initiatives to foster a supportive community.
- It is essential to recognize and address challenges such as academic workload and lack of motivation.
- Targeted interferences should be developed to promote sustained reading habits, as indicated in Table 8.

6.3 Key Findings

i. Correlation with Academic Performance:

The study reveals that a positive correlation between higher reading frequency and elevated academic performance also emphasizing the integral role of consistent reading habits in promotion of academic success (Table 1).

ii. Reading Preferences and Their Implications:

Students are go through a wide range of reading preferences, with a noticeable focus on academic journals and textbooks. This diversity underlines the importance of recognizing and accommodating varied interests in educational strategies. (Referred to Table 3)

iii. Implication for Libraries:

Libraries should consider diversifying their collections and resource formats to meet students' different preferences and needs.

iv. Digital Distractions:

Digital distractions present a considerable obstacle to sustained reading habits. Social media, mobile devices, and online content are the main distraction tools as per students declining reading habits is concern. It is crucial for educational environments to acknowledge these challenges and develop strategies to mitigate their impact. (Table 6 and Table 8)

v. Influence of Peer Interactions:

The study reveals that Peer discussions play a significant role in shaping students' reading behaviours. Leveraging these interactions can be an effective method for promoting a positive reading culture. (Table 7)

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In summary, this study has provided valuable insights into the critical role of reading habits in shaping the personal and academic development of college students. The study shows a clear, positive linkage between how often students read and their overall academic success. Notwithstanding the rise of digital media, traditional reading remains a vital factor in educational achievement. Students' preferences for reading material are diverse, extending beyond just academic texts. Digital distractions, such as social media, significantly impact reading habits. The exclusive reasons to motivate students by choosing correct reading materials and format, highlighting the complexity of their reading behaviours. The findings suggest viable steps for libraries to enhance reading culture and student outcomes. Libraries as well as institutions should encourage both academic and leisure reading to foster a well-rounded reading environment. Strategies might include Establishing reading clubs, Expanding and diversifying reading lists. Institutions should offer awareness programs to help students recognize and manage digital distractions. Consider creating designated reading spaces free from digital interruptions. Identifying the strong influence of peers, institutions can facilitate collaborative reading initiatives. Organize discussion forums and book clubs to build a supportive reading community. To address the challenges such as academic workload and low motivation is essential. Libraries might provide additional resources, mentorship programs, integration of reading activities within coursework. Promoting a campus-wide reading culture is a holistic strategy for developing well-rounded individuals. By implementing these recommendations, libraries can promote academic success and inspire a lifelong love of reading.

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