

The Study on Reading Habits of Senior Secondary Students: Evidence from Vipulanantha College, Vavuniya

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ABSTRACT

Reading habits determine the academic achievements of students to a great extent. The main objective of the study was to examine the reading habits of the students and to overcome the barriers of reading habits in the school libraries. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and data was collected using a structured questionnaire administered among two hundred respondents randomly selected from Gr.10 – Gr.12 students from Vipulanantha College, Vavuniya. The response rate was 93%.

The findings show that the most of the students (73.7%) spend time for reading regularly for less than one hour per day on average. The 55% of students prefer to read text books and the 45% of students preferred to read their materials in the school library environment. The 3.5% of students do not have the interest to read any materials. The 92% of students are interested in reading in their mother language (Tamil). The students (33%) indicated that they did not show much interest in reading due to the influence of Social media.

It can be concluded that average students reading time is very short and they mostly prefer their school library environment. Social media, television and extra-curricular activities adversely affect the reading habits of the students. The action should be taken to increase the library opening hours after school and to encourage students to read other language materials too. Curriculum related additional reading books and internet facilities also have to be made available in the library. It is suggested to arrange a conducive environment to create a reading culture at their residence too.

Keywords: Reading habits, School Library, Students, Vavuniya.

INTRODUCTION

The school library provides a flexible space with a wide and inclusive range of resources to support learning and teaching throughout the school and have a vibrant role in the development of a culture that promotes wider reading, motivated readers and learners for life. It is the central focus in the teaching and learning process. The emphasis these days is very much on learning and developing information acquisition skills, instead of teaching. The role of the teacher-librarian includes encouraging students to cultivate both individual and collective habits of reading more especially when reading is not part of our background at home (Kumar, Devendra and Ansari, 2010).

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Reading occupies a pivotal role in the life of a man. Reading opens the doors of the treasures of knowledge. It is an important means of introducing the child to the world that surrounds him. It is the very foundation on which the edifice of the child is to be built. Reading is one of the most important components of our language and it is an essential tool for a lifelong learning for all learners. In order to face the challenges of 21st century, education has to prepare these learners to adapt to social and technological changes that are taking place at an unprecedented rate. Education under these circumstances depends largely on language competency. In this context, reading especially is a resource for continued education, for the acquisition of new knowledge and skills, for gaining information through media, especially newspapers, books, radio, television, and the computers (Kushmeeta Chettri and Rout S.K., 2013).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading is the ability to understand words contained in a document and make use of the knowledge for personal growth and development (Dadzie, 2008). This implies making meaning out of recorded information either printed or non-printed in the life of an individual. People read for different reasons and purposes, some of which included for pleasure, leisure, relaxation, information and for knowledge.

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 (Palani, 2012). He believes reading is a process of thinking, evaluating, judging, imagining, reasoning and problem solving.

Reading is the essential tool for knowledge transfer and the habit of reading is an academic activity that increases skills in reading strategies. To know about the world and its environment, a child helps himself through reading books, newspapers and other magazines. Once the child has been taught to read and has developed the love for books, he can explore for himself the wealth of human experiences and knowledge through reading. Children, who miss the opportunity of getting in touch with books in their early stages of life, find it hard to acquire good reading habits in their later years (Deavers, 2000). Reading is an intellectual action which is possible only if a man forms a habit of reading and practices these from childhood. Reading habits, therefore, play a very crucial role in enabling a person to achieve practical efficiency. "Laws die but books never." Indeed, books are the most suitable medium through which knowledge is transmitted from generation to generation (Issa et al, 2012).

Singh (2011) examined academic achievement and study habits of higher secondary students. The study was conducted on hundred (100) higher secondary students randomly from two higher secondary schools. The result indicates that girls and boys differ significantly in their study habits and academic achievements.

Bhan and Gupta (2010) on the other hand examined study habits and academic achievement among the students belonging to scheduled caste and non-scheduled caste group. The results revealed that sex has no significant impact on the study habits and academic achievement of students.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Senior secondary students need to improve their reading habits. It is beneficial to have a record of their reading habits in order to make predictions about their academic success in the study. For effective promotion of reading habits, skills and culture, reading must be made pleasurable and voluntary. All shades of opinion must be catered for and well considered. It is such a demonstration of democratic sensitivity that can turn even a reluctant reader to a lover of books. In school library there should be an adequate reading area and related facilities to accelerate their reading habits. There are still barriers to creating a reading environment that inculcates good reading habits in senior secondary school students. The library is still the best place for a quiet study. A serious senior secondary student should be given the priority to study in the library. Library periods should be included and increased in the time table to improve the reading habits among students. Therefore, steps were taken to examine the reading habits of senior secondary students in the school.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the reading habits of senior secondary students?
2. Why do students engage in reading?
3. What kind of materials do they prefer to read?
4. Are there any factors influencing to overcome the barriers of reading habits?

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study was to examine the reading habits of the students and to overcome the barriers of reading habits in the school libraries.

1. To examine the reading habits of senior secondary students.
2. To ascertain their purpose of reading habits of senior secondary students.
3. To find out in which language they prefer to read.
4. To identify the factors to overcome the barriers of reading habits.

METHODOLOGY

The research study explored to find out the reading habits of the senior secondary students of Vavuniya Vipulanatha College. The population for the study was four hundred and sixty-nine students. The two hundred students were selected on a simple random sample basis from the population. From the each division of the classes from Gr.10 - Gr.12 students were selected from the sample by the adoption of Stratified Random Sampling Techniques.

Class	Students	%	Sample
Grade 10	203	43%	86
Grade 11	144	31%	62
Grade 12	122	26%	52
Total	469	100%	200

This study was mainly based on primary data collected through a survey. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect the data. The questionnaire was pre-tested through a pilot survey to improve the reliability and validity of the research instrument on a similar but a smaller

sample group of students. Two hundred questionnaires were administered to this study. The hundred and eighty six (186) questionnaires were filled and returned from the respondents. It represents a response rate of 93%.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

It is revealed that the male of the sample was 48% and female was 52%. Almost both genders were equally contributed for this study. It shows that the age of 15 represents 43% from the sample, the age of 16 and 17 represent 31% and 26% respectively. When considering the age group, the students at the age of 15 are influenced more in this study.

Table 1: Students Distribution in Age

Age	Frequency	%
15	203	43%
16	144	31%
17	122	26%
Total	469	100%

Table 2: Time Spent for Reading

	Frequency	%
Less than one hour	137	73.7%
1 hour	22	11.8%
2 hours	12	6.5%
More than two hours	15	08%

The majority of the students (73.7%) spend less than one hour on reading per day. Only 8% of the students spend more than two hours on reading per day. The variation is possible due to many reasons like lack of time; lack of healthy reading tradition and so on. There is a need to motivate and develop a healthy reading culture in the schools. Moreover, the students should develop a time table to spend their time on different activities like reading materials such as text books, fiction, newspapers, journals, playing games and sports.

Table 3: Preferred Reading Materials and Favourite Place for Reading

Preferred Reading Materials	Frequency	%	Favourite Place for Reading	Frequency	%
Text books	102	55%	Home	45	24%
News papers	45	24%	School Library	84	45%
Periodicals	19	10%	Public Library	49	26%
Internet	14	7.5%	Other places	08	05%
No any materials	06	3.5%			
Total	186	100%	Total	186	100%

It is revealed that the students mostly prefer to read school text books (55%) followed by newspapers (24%), and periodicals and internet 19% and 14% respectively. The 3.5% of students stated that they did not read any materials apart from the school text books. As school students, this type of answer is remarkable and strange, and this has to be taken into serious concern to know their reason. A few students wrote in the comments column, they helped their parents in farming after school that may be the reason they did not have an extra time to read any other materials.

When considering favourite place for reading, it is visible from the data (Table - 05) that school library is the dominating place for reading as the majority of students (45%) prefer to read in school library followed by Public library (26%) and home (24%). Only 05% of students stated that they had found other places as their favourite places. Even the majority stated that their favourite place is school library, however, they complain that regarding space and furniture, which are not sufficient for them. Further, they stated that action had to be taken to improve the infrastructural, sanitation, ventilation and other facilities, which could attract more students towards libraries for reading.

Table 4: Preferred Language for Reading

Preferred Language for Reading	Frequency	Valid Percent
Tamil	171	92%
English	11	06%
Sinhala	04	02%
Total	186	100%

It is shown in (Table- 06) that the majority of students prefer to read in Tamil (92%) followed by English (06%) and only a small number of them (02%) prefer to read in Sinhala Language respectively. As it is a Tamil medium government school, majority prefer reading in Tamil language whereas other languages also influenced the students. Moreover, the students should be trained to read and write in other languages (English and Sinhala) from the primary school level.

The students were asked whether there was any hindrance for reading habits, 33.0% indicated social media, 22% indicated sports, 21% stated Television, 09% expressed that they were not interested in reading while 15% indicated that the hindrance to reading was homework. The study indicated that there is a need for school teachers and parents to encourage them to develop the habit of reading from childhood, so that it would be a part and parcel of them. Thus, when they grow up, they cannot abandon the habit of reading.

Table 7: Factors Affecting the Reading

Factors	Frequency	Valid Percent
Television	39	21%
Sports	40	22%
Homework	28	15%
Social Media	62	33%
No Interest	17	09%
Total		100%

Further, this study examines the reading habits of senior secondary students and attempts to identify the factors necessary to overcome the barriers of reading habits. The male and female students were equally taken into consideration for the review. The age of 15 years' students covers a major part in the population and their influence impact mostly in this study. The majority of the students dedicate their quality time less than one hour per day for their reading. School text books

were found as the most preferred type of reading materials. The school libraries have been increasingly effective in supporting students reading as favourite place. A large number of students preferred to read in Tamil Language as students normally first learn to read in their mother tongue. Social media plays a vital role in the sample group and it affects the students reading habits.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The school library is the vital and central focus in the teaching and learning process. The library is still the best place for quiet reading. This study shows that almost the students from both genders equally responded and young students are more involved in reading. Anyhow, the students need to improve their reading habits, skills and culture. The majority of the students allocate their time for reading text books, as it will effect positively on academic success in the academic performance. It is further stated that on average students reading time is very short. The majority prefers to read Tamil language materials. The students' mostly preferred place for reading is school library environment. Social media, television and extra-curricular activities adversely affect the reading habits of the students.

In school libraries there should be an adequate reading area, appropriate furniture and related facilities to accelerate reading habits as pleasurable and voluntary. Action should be taken to increase the library opening hours even after school and to encourage students to read other language materials too. Beside, library periods should be included in the time table and Book-discussion clubs may be encouraged in the school. Curriculum related additional reading books and internet facilities also have to be made available in the library. It is suggested to arrange a conducive environment to create a reading culture at the residence to transform a reluctant reader to a lover of books.

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