

Research Article

The Power of Pleasure Reading in Digital Era- An Exhilarating Journey to Promote Success in Learning Environment among Youth

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“To read is to fly: it is to soar to a point of vantage which gives a view over wide terrains of history, human variety, ideas, shared experience and the fruits of many inquiries.”

A.C. Grayling

Abstract

Reading is the most basic of basics. Reading is a tool of acquisitive mind; it is a vehicle for obtaining ideas that cannot be transmitted verbally. The child who reads is a successful child: more likely to succeed academically; more likely to succeed socially; and more likely to be inquisitive about the world around them, may be even to feel empowered to try to change it for the better. Reading for pleasure provide learner the language input they need for further development because through extensive reading learners are constantly exposed to foreign language. Those learners who are always engaged in the target language application and stand a better chance of learning. With the rapid changes in information technology, there is a tremendous change in means of communication. A paradigm shift in information delivery from just information to infotainment has also affected the preferences of the information seekers. Teenagers are a demographic group under transition and they are not untouched by these rapid changes in technology and their impact on their reading preferences. The study shows the reasons for the lack of reading among youth and the importance of recreational reading. The primary scrutiny by the researcher revealed that students have low interest towards reading and the majority of these students do not know how to read, and thus, they are faced with reading challenges. Therefore, the resolution of the study is to determine the overall reading achievement and the importance of recreational reading.

Keywords: *Reading Habits, Technology Influence, Lack of reading, Sovereignty of recreational reading*

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Introduction

Learning is essential to our existence. Just like food nourishes our bodies, information and continued learning nourishes our minds. Lifelong learning is an indispensable tool for every career and organization. Today, continuous learning forms a necessary part in acquiring critical thinking skills and

discovering new ways of relating to people from different cultures. To live a life without continuous learning is unthinkable. Learning to read is the acquisition and practice of the skills necessary to understand the meaning behind printed words. For a fairly good reader, the skill of reading should feel simple, effortless and automatic. However, the process of learning to read is complex and builds on cognitive, linguistic, and social skills developed from a very early age. As one of the four core language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking), reading is vital to gain a command of the spoken language. Reading is a good thing and, even as technological advances offer different ways of delivering text and pictures, reading continues to be central in life and certainly in the process of education. Feeling good about books will make children keen to get to school and learn to read, and the more they read the better readers they will become. Fast, fluent readers who have developed reading stamina will deal with the whole curriculum and its reading demands and will grow into adults who have reading as a resource for the whole of their lives.

Statement of the problem

The present generation, especially the college and university students, are well acquainted with the new technology and its applications in the present virtually networked society. It is true that an alarming number of young people today are choosing not to read. Roberts and Foehr (2014) observe that the Internet has fixed dead roots in the lives of the net generation students than all other technological innovations. But, according to Holte (1998, p.80), reading “adds quality to life and provides access to culture and cultural heritage”. He pointed out that reading empowers and emancipates citizens and brings people together. Unfortunately, the habit of reading is declining day by day. The world is becoming smaller because of technological advancement. Huang et al. (2014, p.438) stated that, “the amount of reading is declining significantly and reading skills are decreasing”.

The study shows the reasons for the lack of reading among youth and the importance of recreational reading. The primary scrutiny by the researcher revealed that students have low interest towards reading and the majority of these students do not know how to read, and thus, they are faced with reading challenges. Students, as the focus group of this study seem to read only news and information online on social media and technology, things that are not of academic help. Technology has had a huge impact in decreasing the level of readers for academic purpose. They do not see the importance of reading.

Objectives of the study

The persistence of the study is to determine whether students’ pleasure reading /recreational reading and their attitudes towards reading would affect their overall reading achievement and the importance of voluntary reading. The study aims to show the reading habits of Amrita School of Agricultural Sciences, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Coimbatore and the significance of pleasure reading.

1. Therefore, the objectives of this research article is to attempt to answer the following selected plausible questions:

- What do teenagers prefer to read at leisure?
- What are the reasons for the decline of reading?
- What are the strategies to improve reading habits?

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- Why reading matters?
- What do they gain from pleasure reading?

2. The answers expose the causes what keeps the students away from reading and the possible solutions to develop their reading proficiency.

Method of the study

In this experimental research, in order to find the impact of pleasure on students reading comprehension, a quantitative research design was implemented. To show the importance of pleasure reading, 120 students' participants of Amrita School of Agricultural Sciences, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu were taken for this study. The questionnaire was shared online via Teams App, where the students were asked to give their opinion.

Research questions of the study and Discussions

The following research questions were given to assess their reading ability of the students and to reveal the need for recreational reading and to boost the quality of their academic life and to justify the need for recreational reading and to reinforce, merge people together in a unifying force to achieve professionally successful ones.

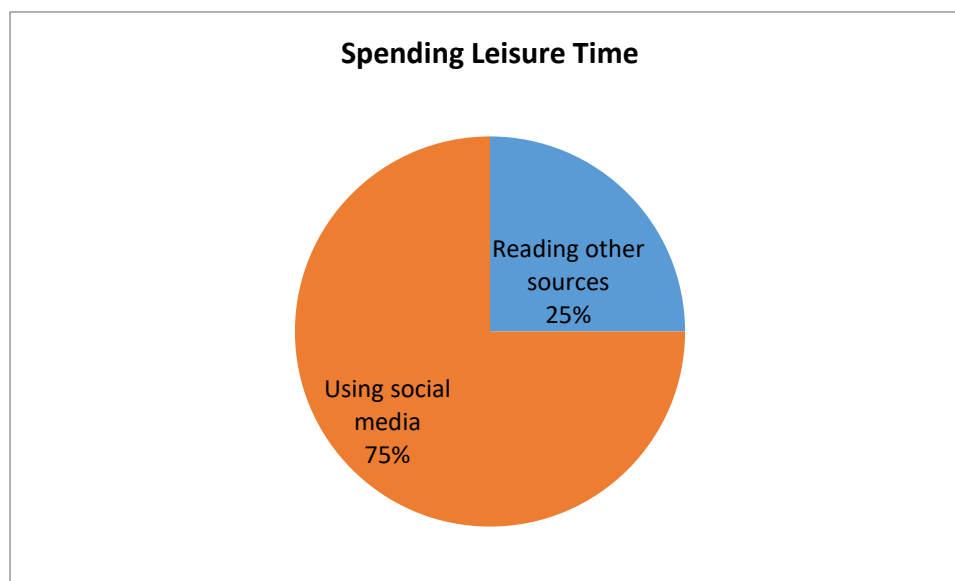


Table 1: How do you spend your leisure period?

Table 1 shows that 90 participants (75%) among 120 spend their leisure by talking over cell-phones, chatting on Facebook or by using other technological instruments. On the other hand, only 30 (25%) participants read novels with other sources to pass their leisure time.

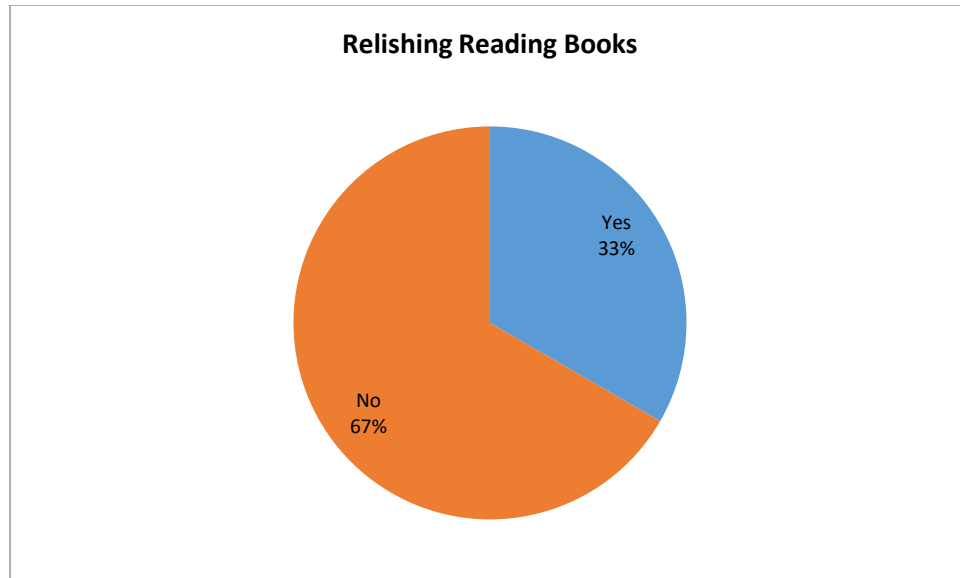


Table 2: Do you relish in reading books?

Table 2 shows the percentages of participants in the question whether they relish reading books. Different people, especially depending on their age, prefer different types of book genre to read. The table shows that 40 participants (33%) among 120 spend on enjoy reading books. On the other hand, only 80 (67 %) among 120 won't have the habit of reading. This table evidences that youngsters are lacking in reading.

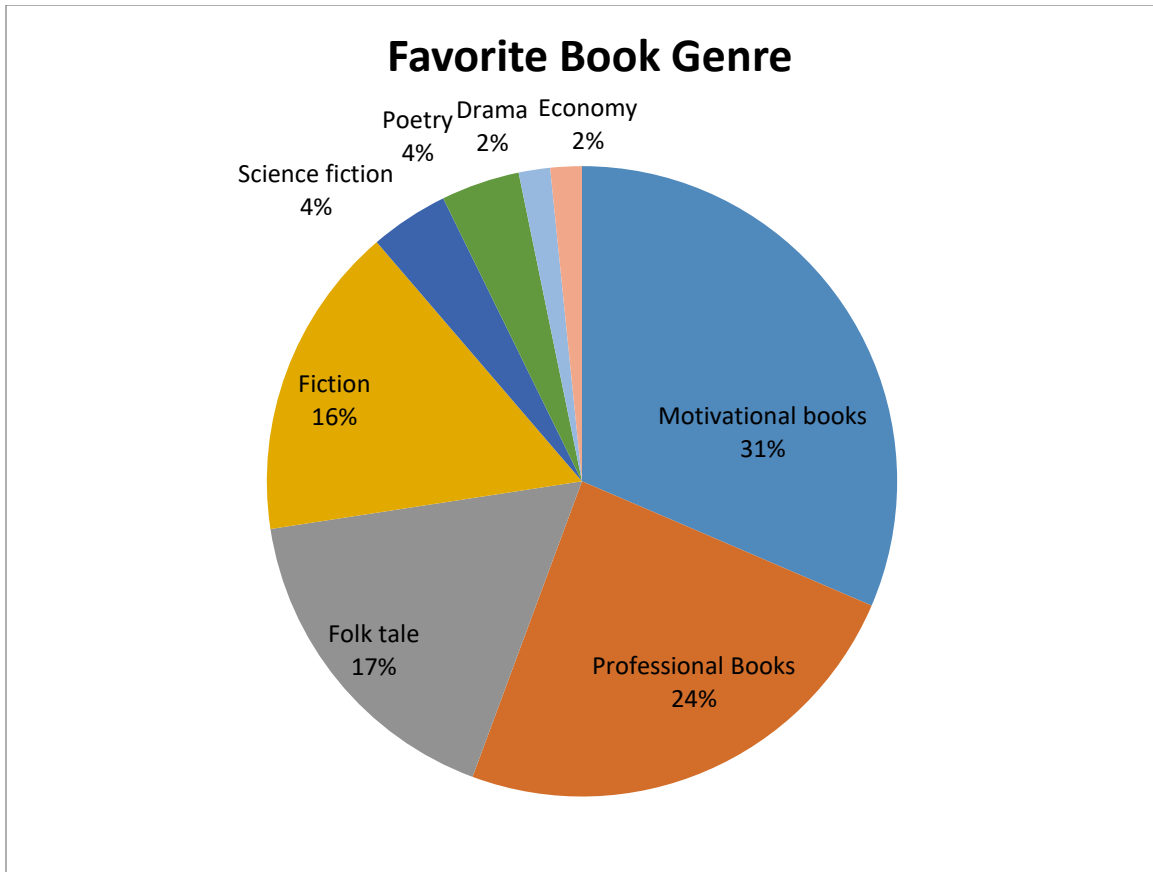


Table 3: What is your favorite book genre?

Table 3 displays the percentages of participants prefer different types of book genre to read. The results of this survey shown that most of the participants, respectively 39 (31%) of them read motivational books, which of course is closely connected to their age. Then, 30 (24%) of them are reading professional books for the academic purpose whereas 21(17%) of them prefer to read folk tale and 20 (16%) of them read fiction, science fiction and poetry read by 5 (4%) on each category. Comparatively, students are giving less importance on each drama and economy genres with 2%.

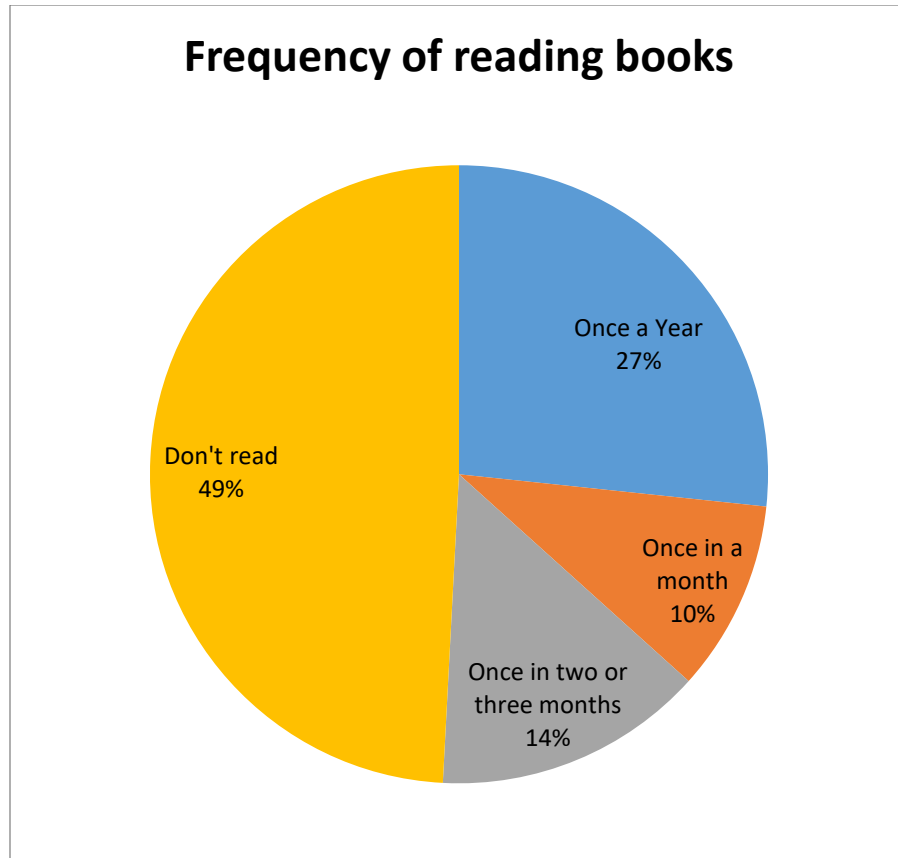


Table 4: How often you read a book?

The above table clearly shows that the frequency of reading a book. Out of 120 participants 32 (27%) are reading a book once a year where as once in a month by a small group of 12 (10%) participants. At the same time, 17 (14%) of them will read once in two or three months. However, there is a big group of 59 (49%) are very honest participants who claim that they simply don't read. This table clearly shows that in the digital era maximum percentage of participants are not interested in book reading.

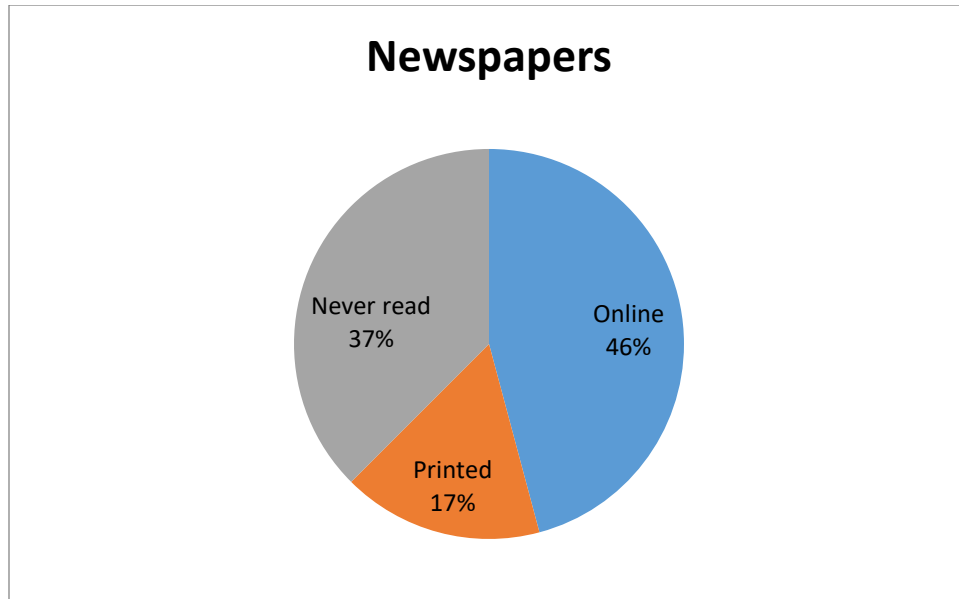


Table 5: Do you read online/printed newspapers?

According to the data in table 5, the vast majority of the participants who took part in the survey, respectively 55 (46%) of them read online newspapers. This is a sign that people are more and more becoming addicted to online news reading and avoid buying printed newspapers. At the same time, 20 (17%) of them read printed newspapers. But 45 (37%) of the participants never read either printed or online form. This habit clearly shows that their concentration is on spending time lavishly on social media for chatting.

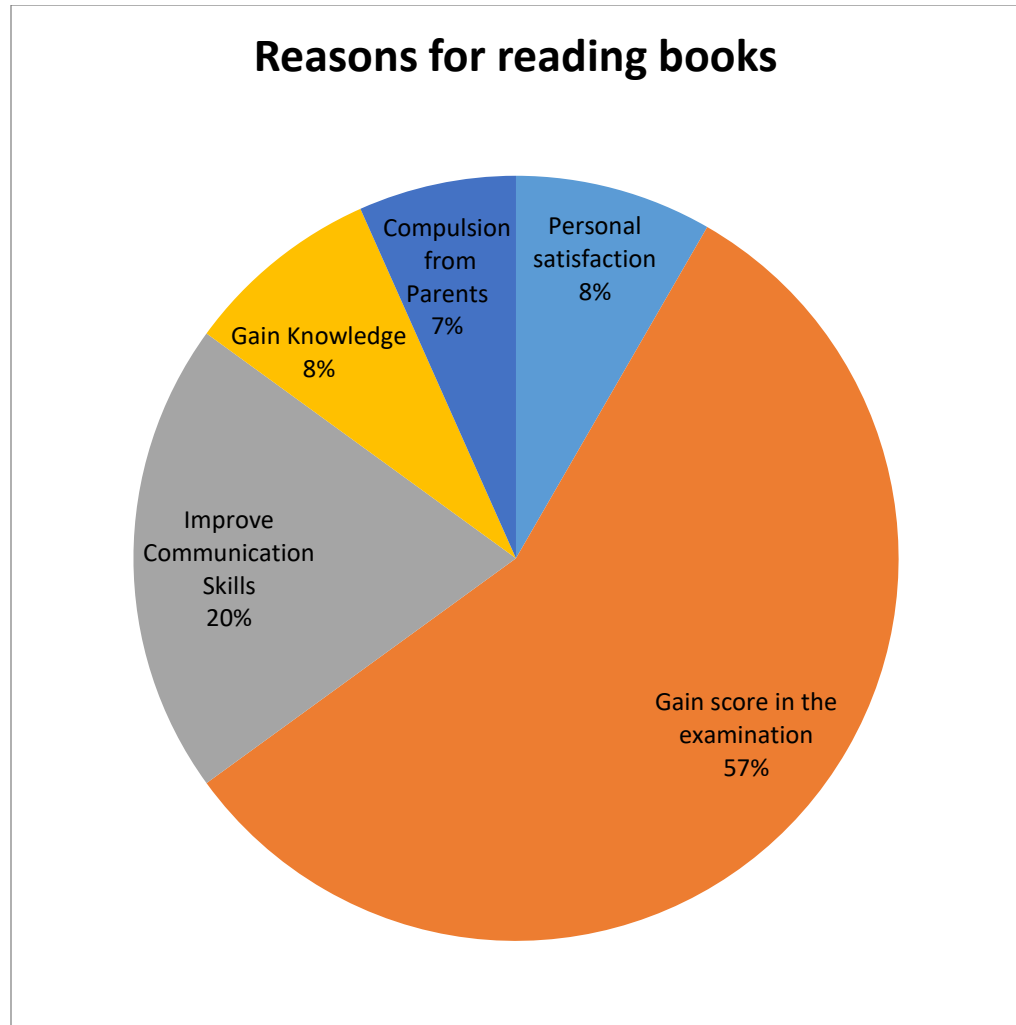


Table 6: What are the reasons for reading books?

The findings presented in Table 6, reveal that the No. of participants who shared their view on the reasons for reading books. Out of 120 students, 10 (8%) of them are telling that they read for personal satisfaction. But maximum students, 68 (57%) of them out of 120 telling that their real reason for reading books are for academic purpose such as to gain score in the examination. At the same time 24 (20%) students are interested to improve their communication skills. Also, 10 (8%) of them have given the reason for reading is to gain knowledge. But 8 (7%) of them are accepting that their parents are compelling them to read.

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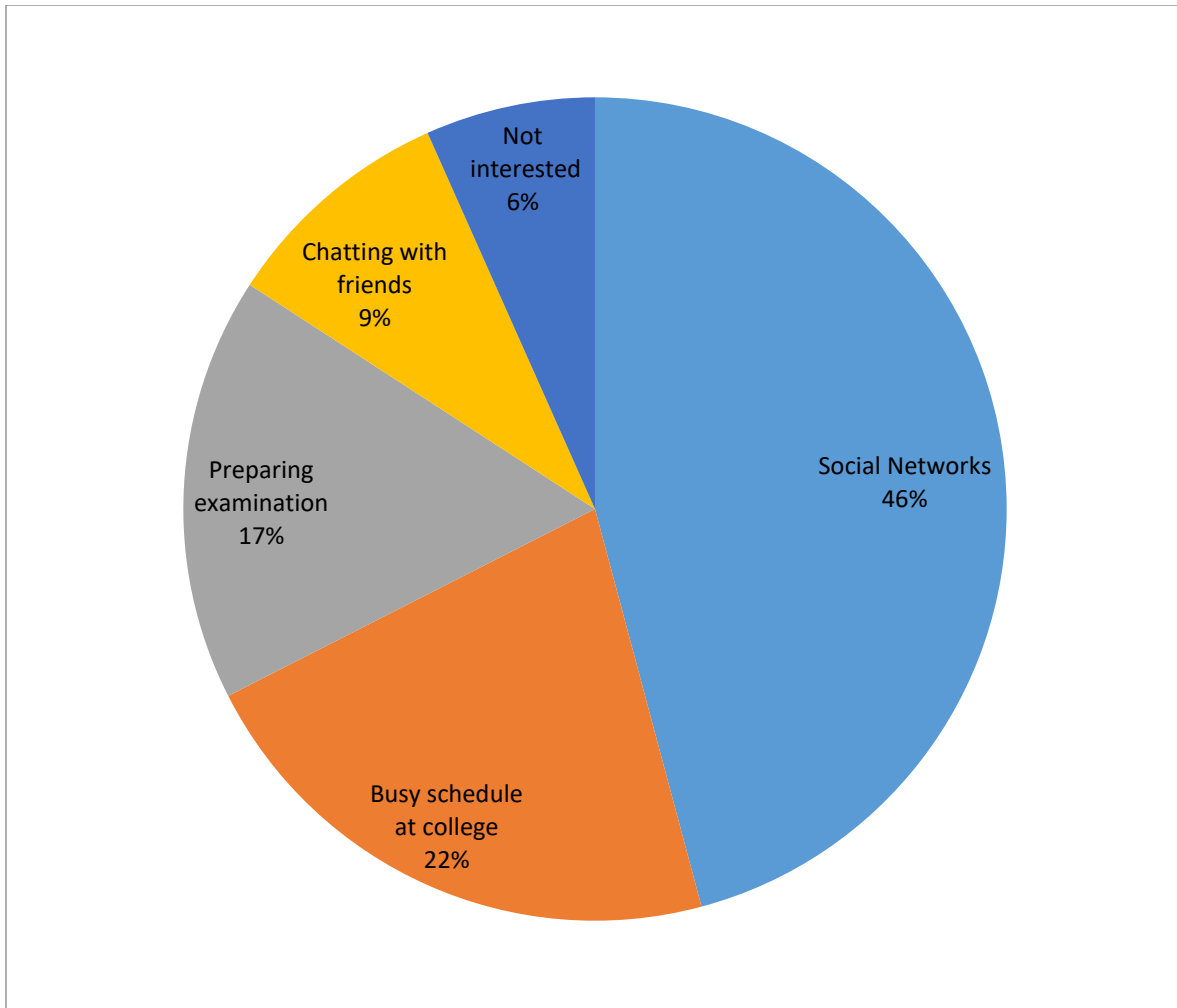


Table 7: What are the reasons that harmfully divert the students reading habits?

Table 7 shows the reasons that harmfully divert the students reading habits. Out of 120 students, 55(46%) of the students engaging themselves actively in social networks like Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram. At the same time, 26 (22%) of them out of 120 are not reading because of busy schedule at college. Then, 20 (17%) of them are concentrating on preparing examination. And 11 (9%) of them interested in chatting with friends while 8 (6%) of them are not at all interested in reading.

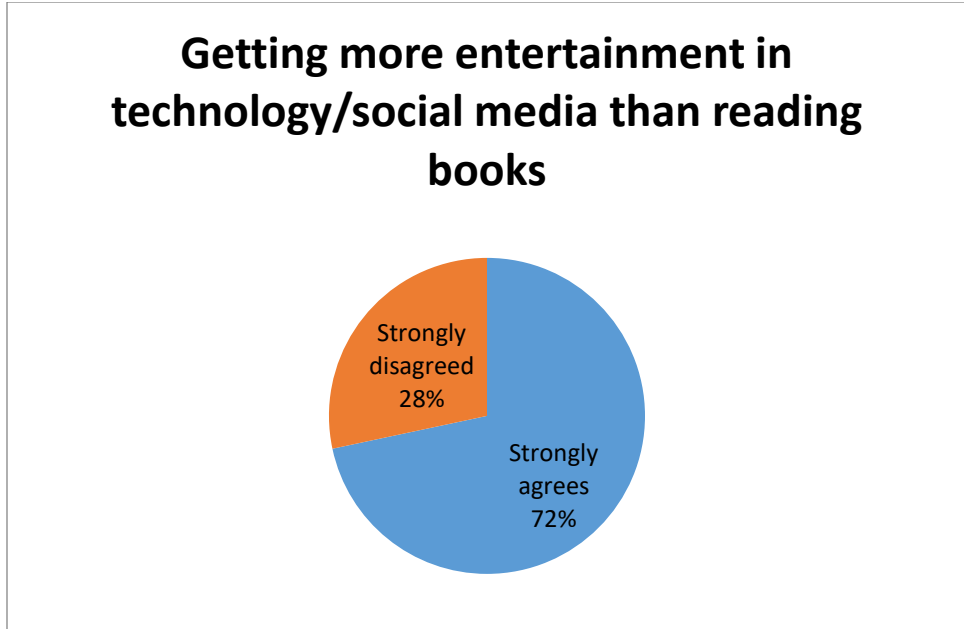


Table 8: Getting more entertainment in technology/social media than reading books

Table 8 demonstrates that out of 120 participants, 86 (72%) strongly agrees that they get more entertainment in technology or social media than reading books whereas 34 (28%) of them strongly disagree the question and assert that they get pleasure in reading rather than spending more time in social media.

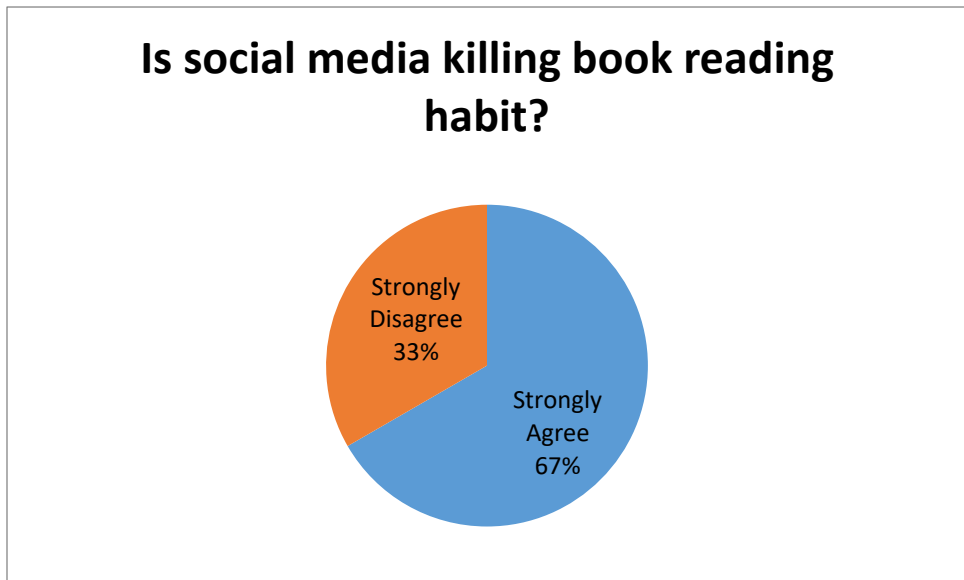


Table 9: Is social media killing book reading habit?

With the advent of social media, books reading habit is becoming history. People are more convenient watching posts, tweets, pictures, chatting etc. on social media. According to the Table 8, this

question is probably one of the most significant questions of the survey. Many students are well aware that due to the impact of the over usage of social media, they could not come out the frequent usage of social media. Students spend at least 15 minutes per visit on social networking sites, whereas they check those sites several times a day. (Shehu & Shehu). This leads to lack of interest in reading. Moreover, they are accepting that the reason for the declining of reading habit. So, 80 (67%) of the participants strongly and honestly agrees that social media is killing their reading habits. On the contrary, out of ignorance, 40 (33%) of them are disagree that it is not affecting their reading habit.

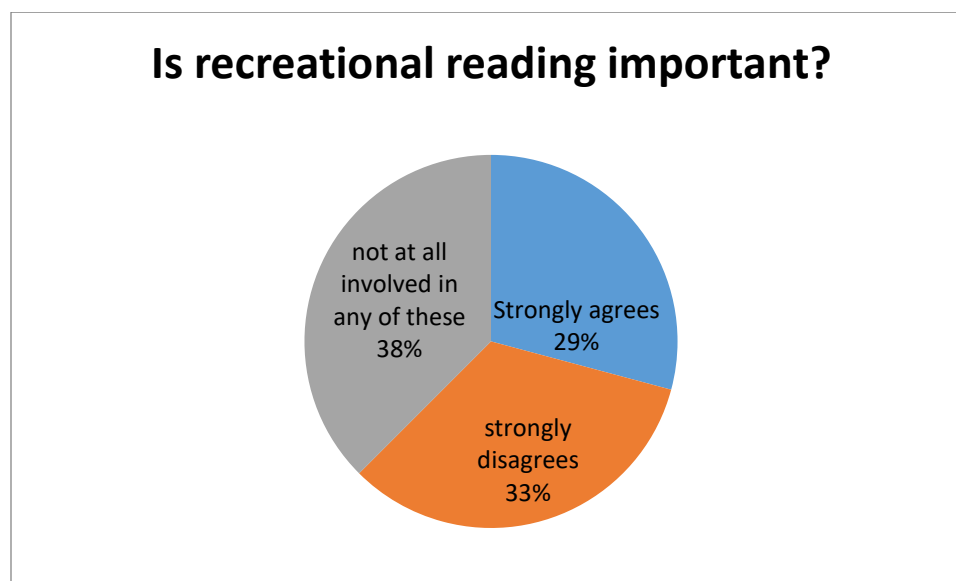


Table: 10 Is recreational reading important?

Table 10 shows the reality that out of 120 participants, 35 (29%) of them strongly agrees that recreational reading is important to develop one's language skill. But 40 (33%) of them disagreeing that due to their lack of reading habits. On the contrast, 45 (38%) out of 120 students are not at all involved any of these and their hobbies may be chatting with friends.

Findings and Discussions

The research questions were given to assess their reading ability and to reveal the need for recreational reading. From the questionnaire point of view, even though enough number of students are ready to read, due to the advancement of technology, reverse effect is going on. Sadly, book reading habit is declining among teens. Teens have stopped reading books as they used decades ago. Stories like Harry Potter, Twilight, To train the Dragon, etc. converted to movies have more followers than the actual novels. Reading is a hobby that has no replacement. Technology has been the primary culprit for the loss of reading habit in today's youngsters. Digital gadgets are responsible for distracting them from their academics as well as reading habits. Technology may have been the biggest distraction in youngsters' life. Considering all findings being displayed, the students had certain level of reading habits. It is shown from the results at

which they prefer reading online news and other types of reading materials. Yet, they also have had some inclination on choosing media of reading items such as printed magazines rather than the online ones. Thus, it can be inferred that they have certain level of reading habits and also reading medium based on their preference simultaneously. So, the need of the hour is to weed out their ignorance and stimulate them to develop the book reading habits and to gain pleasure in it.

Seven Strategies of highly Effective Readers

To strengthen the students reading habit in the digital era, students have to follow some strategies to become an effective readers. One of the best ways for students to acquire fluency, vocabulary and background knowledge is to read a lot recreationally at their independent reading levels. Reading a lot is known to accomplish three learning goals for students:

1. Increase vocabulary (Dickinson & Smith, 1994:&Ehri, 1994)
2. Develop fluency (LaBerge &Samuels, 1974)
3. Add to readers' domain knowledge, especially if they are encouraged to read expository text (Stanovich, 1993: Stanovich &Cunningham, 1993)

According to the author Elaine K. McEwan in his book *7 Strategies of Highly Effective Readers-Using Cognitive Research to Boost K-8 Achievement* stressed the importance of following strategies for the effective readers. Seven Strategies of Highly Effective Readers are Activating, Inferring, Monitoring – Clarifying, Questioning, Searching-Selecting, Summarizing, Visualizing-Organizing. So apart from following the above mentioned strategies students are recommended to make reading a daily habit and they should find reading moments in everyday life to enhance their reading skills.

Why Reading Matters

Reading moments are special times that nurture loving bonds and give children the confidence to try new things. Children get chance to expand their perspectives by talking about the thoughts and feelings of characters in books. Reading and talking about ideas in a book reinforces neural pathways that build brains. Nearly 80% of a child's brain is wired in his or her first five years. Reading helps children think critically and communicate more effectively. It also stimulates their creativity and strengthens their ability to focus and concentrate.

Importance of Reading to Students, Kurtus (2002) opines that reading habit is a fundamental practice that can leave a positive effect on all age groups. The study stressed further that the acquisition of knowledge through reading is a decent approach, however, it must be productive information, it must encourage a man to get on in a profession, pass an examination, be great at decision, or get hold of a status for learning. Guthrie, Benneth, and McGough, (2007) expressed that reading is the demonstration of getting importance from printed or composed words, which is the reason for learning and one of the key ingredients in regular daily existence. Issa, Aliyu, Akangbe, & Adedeji (2012) expressed that reading is generally connected with books as just the composed words give a total picture of the demonstration of reading. It implies that through reading, the individual can fabricate or settle things, appreciate stories, find what others accept and create thoughtful convictions of their own. Subsequently, reading gives the way to all types of

data vital to our everyday survival and development. As indicated by Ilegogie (2005) reading helps in the advancement of one's communication skills and insightfulness.

Children, who miss the chance of connecting with books in their initial stages of life, find it difficult to obtain good reading habit in their later years (Deavers, 2000). "Laws die but books never". Indeed, books are the most appropriate medium through which information is transmitted from one era to another or from one person to another, (Issa et al, 2012). Philip (2009) says, "Reading habit tends to be associated with course work and examinations, rarely with pleasure".

Reading really does change lives and it was the 2002 OECD report Reading for Change which revealed that reading for pleasure is the single most important indicator of future success. 'Finding ways to engage pupils in reading may be one of the most effective ways to influence social change.' It was clearly demonstrated that, across the 32 countries surveyed, children from wealthier and more privileged backgrounds who do not engage with reading. And the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2009, which again made reading the main focus for the international comparison of data from 65 countries and which continues to show the positive impact that reading for pleasure has on scores. The assessment indicates that students who enjoy reading the most in almost every country perform significantly better than those who do not.

Importance of Recreational Reading

Reading for pleasure opens up new worlds for children. It gives them the opportunity to use their imagination to explore new ideas, visit new places and meet new characters. Reading for pleasure also improves children's well-being and empathy. It helps them to understand their own identity, and gives them an insight into the world and the views of others. Research shows that reading for pleasure can be directly linked to children's success throughout their time at school and even into adulthood.

The National Library Trust (UK), defines reading for pleasure, also referred to as independent, leisure or recreational reading, as: Reading we do of our own free will, anticipating the satisfaction we will get from the act of reading. Reading researchers have found positive relationships to exist between the amount of independent reading children do and their achievement in school (Anderson, Wilson & Fielding, 1988; Greaney, 1980; Maxwell, 1977; Taylor, Frye & Marugama, 1990) Morrow (1983) reports that children who demonstrate voluntary interest in books are observed by teachers to be significantly higher on school performance than are children with little or no interest in books. They also score significantly higher on standardized tests and in the areas of social and emotional maturity, work habits and language arts skills.

Morrow and Weinstein (1982) write that young children, when read to frequently, develop more sophisticated language, acquire more background information, have more of an interest in learning to read and generally do learn faster and easier than their peers. To answer the following question, Is Voluntary reading a forgotten goal? According to Lesley Morrow, "Very little programmatic attention is paid to developing voluntary reader, that is youngsters who will choose to read on their own" (1980, p.160).

Historians believe that literacy has had a tremendous impact on society and civilization. The implication is very clear that a productive, democratic society depends mainly on citizens who can read. It is believed that the main reason for teaching children to read is that their own voluntary reading will help

benefit them when they have to function in society. In our society, the most intelligible person is the one who can read and does read. We want to teach youngsters that reading is an absolute must in today's society. Youngsters need to realize the social, cultural, political, moral and educational benefits that come with the ability to read (Morrow, 1986)

Krashen (1989) indicates that reading alone will enlarge encounters with new words, providing learning occasions by inference. The learner encounters unfamiliar words in particular contexts, which will enable the learner to infer the meaning and formulate those words' definitions. According to Dubin & Olstain (1977), the benefits of reading for pleasure that students develop an ability to gain pleasure and also satisfaction from reading on their own in the language they are learning. Extensive reading, or reading for pleasure, will help the students comprehend more and also continue to use the language after the instruction.

To promote success in enhancing the environment reading habit, parents and teachers will have a major role to play and they will have to come up with enterprising ways to encourage and entice children towards reading. Ajila and Olutola (2000) opine that the condition of the home influences a person's reading habit since the parents are the major caretakers in a person's life. The family background and location of a child influences his/ her response to life circumstances and his level of performance. In general, schools need to use programs designed to encourage students to become readers. According to Davidson and McNinch (1992) believe that schools should promote instruction that will help students grow both in their reading skills and in their overall process of becoming lifelong readers as well.

Limitations of the study

This study intended to cultivate effective contribution practices which promote recreational reading as well as promote success in literacy environment among younger generation. One of the limitations of the study is its small sample size with 120 participants, which may not be ideal with a larger group of students. Future studies may be needed to confirm the consistence of the study. The survey was just implemented in one of the colleges in a private university which is placed in Coimbatore. For further study, it is desirable to include some other universities from different parts of region.

Conclusion

Books can be a vital force in molding the lives of those who read. Teaching and training our citizens to be good readers is probably the best guarantee of a free and secure future for all. Depth in reading helps to develop the mind and personality of a person; it provides insights into human problems, and influences attitudes and behavior. From this analysis, it is apparent that technological advancement creates unavoidable barriers for intellectual development. In other words, reading helps to mould a person's character. It is well known that books can be a stimulating agent for building oneself. In this fast changing world, there are going to be lots of distractions. We must innovate to make book-reading relevant again. Encouraging book-reading through social media, incorporating reading in social media, eBooks, developing relevant and quality literature, role models with whom the teens can connect, etc. can be a few starting steps. To conclude, reading is the most effective investment that makes the person grow and helps the person to grow into an inspiring, creative and intelligent one. So always keep reading irrespective of any resistive habits that keep away from books because *the person who doesn't read when he can is no different from the person who can't read at all...*

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