



FACTORS AFFECTING LIFE-LONG READING HABITS
OF UiTM JOHOR STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the life-long reading habits of UiTM Johor students' for the purpose of reading for pleasure. The aim of this study is to examine the roles of factors like oneself, peers, family, society and modern devices in the cultivation of life-long reading habits. Data collected through a questionnaire (N= 250 students) and a structured interview (N= 50 students) provided valuable insights about the significant roles of the factors in promoting life-long reading habits. The study revealed that internal and external factors do play a role in nurturing life-long reading habits. However, the most significant factor is the role of 'society,' which plays a crucial role in cultivating reading habits. Thus it is suggested that the role of 'society' be increased in nurturing life-long reading habits.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Life-long reading habits may be defined as reading skills that are practiced continuously throughout a reader's life because it brings pleasure to the reader. Such reading skills are important throughout our lifespan, as it has been found to improve reading comprehension, writing style, vocabulary, spelling and grammatical development (Krashen, 1993). The positive and rewarding effects of reading for pleasure or life-long reading habits have been demonstrated in numerous studies (Burgess, 1994; Krashen, 1984, 1993).

Studies however, have shown that in our exam-oriented educational system, Malaysian students only read for the sake of passing examinations and fulfilling the school requirements (New Straits Times, 29 August 1996, as cited by Ambigapathy, 2000). According to Chitravellu (1997) and Osman (1997) the exam-oriented educational system in Malaysia promotes rote learning causing a need for a paradigm shift in how we view education system. The National Literacy Survey conducted by the National Library in 1996 reported that an average Malaysian reads only two books a year (Sarjit & Rosy, 2000; The Star, 16 July, 2006).

Reading involves more than just recognizing and pronouncing a few characters that are arranged in a particular manner. It is the ability to understand and perceive the meanings of the arrangements within the total context (Bullock, 1975). Thus, readers have to be able to engage in critical and creative thinking in order to relate what they read to what they already know. The complexity of the reading process demands the reader's self-interest, motivation from parents, teachers and peers as well as challenges from modern devices in influencing the reading pattern. These internal and external factors are important in enabling the building of a reading culture in society.

1.2 Purpose of study

The purpose of this study is to investigate UiTM Johor students' life-long reading habits. When students reach tertiary level, reading widely both for academic purposes and for leisure are expected of them. The expectations of the lecturers are that students have proficiency in reading in the English language. Failing to meet this demand would mean inability to perform academically. Stoyhoff (1997) stated that academic success in the tertiary level includes language proficiency, learning and study strategies and certain personal characteristics. Thus, it would be interesting to look at students' acquisition of life-long reading habits at the tertiary level.

Over the past twenty years, an increasing number of Malaysians has enrolled in institutions of higher learning in the country. Admission decisions are usually made on the basis of the applicants' academic performance. Hence, identifying the reading habits