

READING HABITS OF STUDENTS AT UITM SARAWAK



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ABSTRACT

This study employed a quantitative research method to investigate reading habits of college students at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Sarawak. A total of 400 (108 male and 292 female) students voluntarily participated in the study by completing a self-reported survey. Descriptive analysis indicated that 235 (58.8%) of them are Forced Readers, 91 (22.8%) are Reluctant Readers, 42 (10.5%) are Avid Readers, 29 (7.3%) are Marginal Readers, and 3 (0.8%) are Non-Readers. The preference for reading softcopy materials is more evident among them, but not for the avid readers. The hours spent on reading are equivalent to 27 books per year. Although a high percentage (87.5%) agreed that they read to complete their assignments, more than 70% agreed that they read because of interesting contents. This high percentage of respondents who agreed with reading interesting contents, especially among Avid Readers (85.7%) is a positive indication. The most preferred language for academic reading is English. Top three preferred reading materials are magazines and hobbies, fiction and newspapers. However, three main factors that hinder reading among these respondents are online activities, watching television, and heavy assignments and workloads. The results not only provide meaningful data on reading habits, but also useful insights for the planning and development of student enrichment programs or activities. The management of UiTM Sarawak library may use the study findings to plan for reading campaigns and to keep up with the reading needs of these students.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Malaysians were reported to have read only two books per year in 2005. A study conducted in 2010 reported that Malaysians read eight to twelve books a year (NST, 2014). People in developed countries, however, read at least twenty books a year. While it is noted that Malaysians have read more books in a year now, the number of books read per year is comparatively lower than the norm for developed countries. Generally, students are expected to read more than others. This study is set out to identify the reading habits of college students in Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Sarawak. The purpose of the study is not only to identify the students' opinion on reading, but also to examine the different types of readers, and their preference for reading. The focus is to explore the reasons, motivation, reading hours, and hindering factors for reading. The study is an expansion of our earlier study (Mahdi, Unin, & Sali, 2015) on reading habits for library users at Pustaka Negeri Sarawak. Findings from that previous study indicate that, on average, the library users read between two to five hours per week. That reading hours signify a reading pattern of thirteen to twenty books a year, based on the assumption of reading one book is equivalent to seven hours of reading (KP PNM, Bernama 11 Mac 2011). Reading thirteen to twenty books a year shows a promising trend that necessitates further study. This follow-up study is deemed essential to gather more empirical data to support and elaborate on the above findings. The results from this study not only provide meaningful data on the students' reading habits but also offer useful insights for the library of UiTM Sarawak to keep up with the reading needs of these college students. Additionally, the findings are valuable for the planning and development of student enrichment programs or activities.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF STUDY

The literacy rate of 93 percent among Malaysians is one of the highest in the world (Odekon, 2006). However, the reading habits among these literate citizens are considered low, since they read only eight to twelve books in year 2010. Reading habits do not only constitute the amount of time spent on reading, but also the kind of materials people read. The quantity of reading done and the reading material varies among different types of readers. For example, avid readers spend more time on reading than marginal readers. There are five categories of readers, based on their reading habits, as established by Ong (2002).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Reading plays an essential role in developing individual literacy and educational attainment. A good reading habit is not only important for the development of personality and mental capabilities, but also helps readers to nurture creative thinking. This chapter reviews the literature on reading habits and types of readers.

2.2 READING HABITS

Reading is an essential life skill that can increase our knowledge. At the same time, reading can build maturity and character, sharpen our thinking, and widen our awareness in a variety of issues such as social, economic or political (Christopher, 2010). Owusu-acheaw (2014) asserts that reading can enhance one's personality and develop thinking skills to create new ideas. Additionally, reading requires people to analyze and screen out what the author intended to convey, hence, it helps to boost up the readers' critical thinking skill. Reading habits refer to regular tendencies in reading behaviors (Kaur & Thiagarajah, 999). A good reading habit is necessary to inspire creative and innovative minds (Mohini et al., 2012). Essentially, a good reading habit helps to create more creative thinking, which can lead to mental and spiritual development (Zainal et al., 1990).

Good reading habits are essential, especially for research workers, educationists, and students, whose future would require them to become thinkers. In fact, good reading habits can act as a strong root for students to excel in life (Bashir & Matoo, 2012). Although reading is the foundation to a learner's success in education, it is reported that Malaysian students do not read much (Kaur & Thiagarajah, 1999). Oppenheim (1962) found that a high percentage of students neither read novels nor fiction during their free time. Pandian (2001) also found that university students were hesitant to read English language materials. In addition, Palani (2012) affirms that young people these days are less concerned and interested in reading books, magazines and journals. In fact, many students read for the sake of passing the examinations. On that note, Ogbodo (2010) argues that it is necessary for students to read magazines in addition to reading lecture notes and text books.