

Factors that influence the reading habit among form one boys: A case study of SMK SS17 Subang Jaya

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Abstract

The purposes of this study are to investigate which factors influence the reading habit and choice of reading materials among form one boys of SS17 Secondary School in Subang Jaya. This research helps to find out the factors that contribute to the lack of interest in reading among form one male students, the reading materials that are often read by form one male students and the problems that male students face in cultivating their reading habit. This is a quantitative study that emphasizes on the relation of three main factors which are the materials read, the time spent reading various reading materials and the person who influences the reading habit. The research instruments used are questionnaire and structured interview. Data obtained from these two research instruments were analyzed using the Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS). The data revealed that the respondents read from a wide range of reading materials (20%) each for books, magazines, newspapers, comics and websites. A majority of the respondents read less than an hour for the following reading materials; reference/exercise books, general knowledge books, novels/story books and newspapers. Encouragement to read is important for all students in order to increase the interest of students towards reading. Encouragement to read should come from multiple sources such as from the home, school and also community.

Keywords: reading, motivation, socio-cultural background, encouragement

1.0 The problem

1.1 Introduction

The problem of non-reading, especially among school students has drawn public attention in recent years. A Malaysian survey on the reading behavior by the Ministry of Education (New Straits Times, 29 August 1996) on 22,400 individuals and 6,050 households revealed that only 20 per cent of Malaysian read regularly. This survey further stressed that the small figure includes students who read just to pass examinations.

This phenomenon should not be left unchecked as it can prevent the development of knowledge, intelligence and maturity in an individual. As Malaysia aspires to be a fully developed nation by the year 2020, she needs individuals who are progressive in striving for self-development. To ensure progress, a good reading habit is important.

This study investigated the following research questions:

1. What are the materials read by form one male students at home and at school?
2. How frequent different types of reading materials are read by form one male students at home and at school?
3. Who is the person that influences form one male students to read the most?

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Types of readers

Irene (2001) and Beers (1996) categorized readers into three groups; dormant readers, non-committed readers, and unmotivated readers. The dormant readers were those who like to read and consider themselves as readers but did not take time to read regularly or update their knowledge. They did not have a negative attitude to reading but gave priority to other activities such as social life, sports and school work.

The second and third groups of readers were the non-committed and unmotivated readers. These two groups have negative attitudes towards reading and did not like to read. The non-committed readers have positive attitudes towards reading and agreed to suggestions on reading in the future. The unmotivated readers have negative attitudes towards reading and were not open to suggestions on reading in the future.

2.2 Types of reading motivation

The reader types are closely related to the motivation to read, as reflected in the various kinds of reading chosen. According to Bamberger (1975) and Irene (2001), four primary types of reading motivation can be identified which are informative reading, escapist reading, literary reading and cognitive reading.

First is informative reading. Informative reading's primary motivation is the need for direction in life and in the world. The importance of informative reading is the importance of information it brings to function for personal life and life in the community. Second is escapist reading. Escapist reading's motivation is the need to fulfill wishes; escape reality and live in a world without responsibilities and limits.

Third is literary reading. Literary reading's motivation is the need to seek inner meaning and recognition of typical everyday events. Lastly is cognitive reading. Cognitive reading's motivation lies in philosophy; longing for knowledge about understanding oneself, others and the world.

2.3 Boys' reading choices

Doiron (2003) examines the content of elementary classroom and school libraries and considers gender differences in students' personal or independent reading. Doiron concludes that educators are doing well at presenting and promoting the reading of fiction. His findings show boys read a balance of fiction and information books.

Blair and Sanford (2003) have recently focused on boys, male interests in reading and writing, and created a Boys and Literacy website to highlight their research. They state that literacy for boys is a social practice which shapes their identities and helps them to develop and maintain relationships with peers. Boys tend to interact socially over non-fictional texts, magazines, newspapers, Internet sites, and videogames. They choose reading material to help inform their interests and those of their peer group. Their common choices of books are "how to", informational, and fantasy.

Boys are adapting and reshaping or "morphing" the traditional academic literacy skills they are learning at school to apply to new literacies that appeal to them: war, sports, computers, video games, and chat rooms. Blair and Sanford (2004) outline five reasons boys read and write: personal interest, action, success, fun, and purpose.

Lewis (1999) states that the boys tend to choose by genre and, if considering fiction, look for action with some violence. According to Lewis, boys are learning about themselves in relation to authority, power and aggression. She feels that "independent reading" and "free choice" are activities which students are learning social identities from the surrounding culture.

3.0 Research Methodology

Sixty form one male students were surveyed and a subset of those students was interviewed to investigate whether or not differences existed between avid and reluctant readers. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used for this study as the questionnaire revealed statistical data while the individual interviews investigated the students' perspective on reading.

Data collected for research question one revealed the type of reading materials preferred by form one male students to be read. It further investigates why the students chose those reading materials, their reading attitudes and motivation.

Data collected for research question two revealed the frequency of reading and length of time spent on reading in relation towards other activities. Date collected for research question three revealed the people whom influence form one male students to read, how the people modeled the reading behavior and how they promoted the reading habit.

4.0 Findings

4.1 Introduction

The questionnaire data is compared with the data from the interview before a conclusion is made to see any relations or not. The findings are organized into three which are factors that contribute to the lack of interest in reading, the reading materials that are often read and the problems faced in cultivating their reading habit.

4.2 Data gathered

	Questionnaire Data	Interview Data
Factors that contribute to the lack of interest in reading	<p>Reasons for reading various reading materials:</p> <p>Reference/Exercise Books Succeed in examinations (61.7%) Forced to read by parents (28.3%)</p> <p>General Knowledge Books To gain knowledge (41.7%) For Entertainment (31.7%)</p> <p>Novel/Story Books For entertainment (55.0%) To fill up leisure time (28.3%)</p> <p>Newspapers To gain knowledge (36.7%) To fill up leisure time and entertainment (36.6%)</p> <p>Magazines To fill up leisure time and entertainment (66.6%)</p> <p>Comics To fill up leisure time (50%) For entertainment (50%)</p> <p>Websites For entertainment (36.7%) To gain knowledge (31.7%)</p>	<p>Number of reading materials available at home:</p> <p>Avid Readers (3/5) More than 100</p> <p>Reluctant Readers (3/5) Less than 100</p> <p>Types of reading materials available at home:</p> <p>Avid Readers Newspapers, Reference books, Textbooks, Exercise books, Novels and Story books.</p> <p>Reluctant Readers Magazine, Newspapers, Textbooks and Exercise books.</p>

<p>Reading materials that are often read</p>	<p>Amount of time spent by reading materials:</p> <p>Reference/Exercise Books Less than 1 hour (46.7%) 1 – 3 hours (36.6%)</p> <p>General knowledge Books 1 – 3 hours (46.7%) Less than 1 hour (28.3%)</p> <p>Novel/Story Books 1 – 3 hours (46.7%) Less than 1 hour (28.3%)</p> <p>Newspapers 1 – 3 hours (50%) Less than 1 hour (26.7%)</p> <p>Magazines 1 – 3 hours (53.3%) Less than 1 hour (30%)</p> <p>Comics Above 4 hours (41.7%) 2 – 3 hours (25%)</p> <p>Websites Above 4 hours (41.7%) 2 – 3 hours (25%)</p>	<p>Where the materials obtained:</p> <p>Reference/Exercise Books Bought by parents (83.3%) Bought (8.3 %)</p> <p>General knowledge Books Bought by parents (75%) Bought (13.3%)</p> <p>Novel/Story Books Bought by parents (66.7%) Borrowed from friends (16.7%)</p> <p>Newspapers Bought by parents (80%) Bought (16.7%)</p> <p>Magazines Borrowed from friends (66.7%) Bought (16.7%)</p> <p>Comics Bought (75.0%) Borrowed from friends (16.7%)</p> <p>Websites Access from home (35%) Access from outside of home (65%)</p>
<p>Problems faced in cultivating the reading habit</p>	<p>People that promote the reading habit:</p> <p>Mother (51.7%) Brother/Sister (13.3%)</p> <p>People that give advice on materials to be read:</p> <p>Friends and own interest (50%) Mother (41.7%)</p> <p>Reading materials read by person who gives advice in selecting materials:</p> <p>Books (60%) Websites (25%)</p>	<p>Frequency of visit to the school library:</p> <p>Once (38.3%) Never (36.7%)</p> <p>Reasons for going to the school library:</p> <p>To read magazines and newspapers (41.7%) To rest/relax (35.0%)</p> <p>When the school library is visited:</p> <p>During recess (63.3%) Do not go (16.7%)</p>

4.3 Summary of the findings

It can be concluded that most of the respondents are dormant readers. Dormant readers were those who like to read and consider themselves as readers but did not take time to read regularly or update their knowledge. They did not have a negative attitude to reading but gave priority to other activities.

5.0 Discussion and conclusion

5.1 Reading frequency

5.1.1 Reading at school

A majority of the respondents go to the school library to rest/relax (35%) and read magazines (25%). Most of the respondents borrowed no books from the school library. This is because they believed that their library did not have enough reading materials. This indicates that most of the respondents do not do read much at school.

5.1.2 Reading at home

First and foremost are reference/exercise books. A majority of the respondents (48.7%) read less than one hour, followed by an equal number (18.3%) each read for one hour or two to three hours. Secondly are general knowledge books. A majority of the respondents (28.3%) read for less than one hour, followed by one hour (26.7%) and two to three hours (20%). Thirdly are novel/story books. A majority of the respondents (28.3%) read less than one hour, followed by one hour (26.7%), and two to three hours (20%). Next are magazines. A majority of the respondents (30%) each read either for less than one hour or up till one hour, followed by two to three hours (23.3%). After that are newspapers. A majority of the respondents (26.7%) read less than one hour, followed by an equal number (25%) each for one hour or two to three hours. Besides all these are comics. A majority of the respondents (41.7%) read above four hours, followed by two to three hours (25%). Finally are websites. A majority of the respondents (41.7%) read for more than four hours, followed by two to three hours (25%).

5.2 People who influence the reading habit

5.2.1 Friends

Fifteen respondents (25%) state that their friends gave advice on reading materials to be read. Only two respondents (3.3%) state that their friends promoted the reading habit to them. This indicates that friends play a significant role in promoting reading materials to be read but not the reading habit itself.

5.2.2 Family members

Mothers play a significant role in promoting the reading habit as 31 respondents (51.7%) state that their mother as the most prominent member of their family who promotes the reading habit. In addition to this, 25 respondents (41.7%) also state that their mothers recommended reading materials to be read. This indicates that mothers play a significant role in promoting both the reading habit and reading materials to be read.

5.3 Problems in promoting the reading habit

5.3.1 Length of time reading

A majority of the respondents read less than an hour for the following reading materials; reference/exercise books, general knowledge books, novels/story books and newspapers. It is interesting to note that most respondents read above four hours for comics and websites. This indicates that the respondents spent less time reading materials that are filled with a lot of information and prefer to read reading materials that contain entertainment and concise information.

5.3.2 Less encouragement to read

Only mothers play an active role in promoting the both the reading habit and selection of reading materials to be read by the respondents. The books that are recommended by their mother may not suite their interests. This will directly discourage the interest in reading as they may have to read materials that they do not like.

5.4. Implications of the study

This research has come up with several suggestions to increase the reading habit among students.

5.4.1 Give more time to use the school library

Most of the students use the school library during recess. Recess is usually a short period of time in schools and much cannot be done during recess. The school should allocate a special time period for the use of the school library for each class in the school by their respective forms. The school library should lengthen its operation hours especially in the afternoon session and also on weekends. This will allow students to have the freedom to use the school library according to their own free tine.

5.4.2 Encourage students to read

Encouragement to read is important for all students in order to increase the interest of students towards reading. Encouragement to read should come from multiple sources such as from the home, school and also community. Both parents should play a huge role in promoting the reading habit to their children. They should spend time reading to and reading with their children. Besides this, they should be role models in reading; show interest in reading and read a lot themselves. In addition to this, parents should also provide adequate reading materials at home and provide a quiet and suitable reading place and to read for their children. Teachers that teach language subjects should recommend suitable reading materials for their students to read based on the subject that they are teaching. They should recommend reading materials that are appropriate to their students' language proficiency, psychosocial development and interests.

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