

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN READING ATTITUDES, SUBJECTIVE
NORMS, PERCEIVED BEHAVIOURAL CONTROL AND READING HABITS
AMONG UTHM UNDERGRADUATES

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate my thesis to the memory of my mother, **Nuriah Ismail** (1962-2015), and my father **Sadeq Ali** (1960-2007), who was a constant source of inspiration. I hope they would have been proud.

The greatest fortune of my life is that I have a caring and thoughtful family with whom I could push the boat out on this journey. My siblings (**Akram, Ismail, Zainab, Ali, Azzahraa,**) and my sisters-in-law **Manal, Sara, and Maram**. Most importantly, I wish to thank my sweetheart **Dr. Wahid Ali** for his love, tolerance, financial support, and for keeping his trust in me. Your prayers for me were what sustained me thus far. I will be forever grateful to you. To my little angels, **Wed, Izz and Mesk**. To my husband's family members: **Ummi, Ammi, Muna and Ikhlas** for their continuous prayers. Last but not least, thanks to my **friends** for their care and continuous prayers and to those who have helped me throughout the whole duration of doing this research successfully.

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ABSTRACT

Reading habits and attitudes towards reading are two of the most critical topics in social research. With the evolution of information technology, the leisure reading habits of students have changed. The purpose of this study is to understand the leisure reading habits among undergraduates in UTHM and to investigate the drivers of leisure reading habits based on the integration of the theory of planned behaviour. A model based on the *theory of planned behaviour* was derived to examine the relationships between attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control towards reading habits. A quantitative research method was applied in this study and data were collected via online questionnaires that were distributed among 379 undergraduates of UTHM. The study employed SPSS for the purpose of data analysis. Results were analysed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis. Three main findings arose from this study: first, the students read for 30 minutes to 1 hour per day and their most frequent reading materials are websites. Second, the results showed that students have overall positive attitudes toward reading despite the minimal time they spent reading every day. Besides, students place a great value on social referents' perceptions of their reading. However, the results showed that students are neutral when it comes to their ability in reading. Finally, based on the regression model, only affective attitude, perceived ability and perceived opportunities have a significant effect on students' reading habits. Consequently, educators could help students build their reading skills by directing them to reliable and engaging resources online. The implication of this study could improve the quality of learning by providing students with various reading materials and enhancing their reading skills to actively engage in reading activities especially in language classroom.

ABSTRAK

Tabiat membaca dan sikap terhadap membaca adalah dua topik yang paling kritikal dalam penyelidikan sosial. Dengan evolusi teknologi maklumat, tabiat membaca masa lapang pelajar telah berubah. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk memahami tabiat membaca masa lapang dalam kalangan mahasiswa di UTHM dan mengenalpasti pendorong tabiat membaca masa lapang berdasarkan integrasi teori tingkah laku terancang. Satu model berdasarkan teori tingkah laku terancang telah digunakan untuk mengkaji hubungan antara sikap, norma subjektif, dan kawalan tingkah laku terhadap tabiat membaca. Kajian ini menggunakan kaedah kajian kuantitatif, serta data dikumpul melalui soal selidik dalam talian yang diedarkan di kalangan 379 mahasiswa UTHM. Bagi tujuan analisis data, kajian ini menggunakan SPSS. Keputusan dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif dan analisis regresi berganda. Tiga dapatan utama kajian ini: pertama, mereka membaca selama 30 minit hingga 1 jam sehari dan laman web ialah bahan yang paling kerap dibaca. Kedua, mereka mempunyai sikap positif terhadap membaca, walaupun mereka meluangkan masa yang minimum untuk membaca setiap hari. Selain itu, pelajar meletakkan nilai yang tinggi pada persepsi rujukan sosial terhadap pembacaan mereka. Walau bagaimanapun, keputusan menunjukkan bahawa pelajar bersikap neutral dalam hal kebolehan mereka dalam membaca. Akhir sekali, berdasarkan model regresi, hanya sikap afektif, persepsi keupayaan, dan peluang yang dirasakan mempunyai kesan yang signifikan terhadap tabiat membaca pelajar. Kesannya, pendidik boleh membantu pelajar membina kemahiran membaca mereka dengan memandu pelajar ke sumber yang boleh dipercayai dan menarik dalam talian. Implikasi kajian ini dapat meningkatkan kualiti pembelajaran dengan menyediakan pelajar pelbagai bahan bacaan dan meningkatkan kemahiran membaca mereka dengan melibatkan diri secara aktif dalam aktiviti membaca, terutamanya dalam kelas bahasa.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | | |
|------|---|-------------------------------------|
| UTHM | - | Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia |
| UiTM | - | Universiti Teknologi Mara |



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PTTA UTHM
PERPUSTAKAAN TUNKU TUN AMINAH

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Reading is a very good habit that one needs to develop in life. Reading is central to students' education and is a source of knowledge and entertainment (Erdem, 2015). Reading is the practice of understanding and obtaining information for progression and personal growth (Fatiloro, Adesola, Hameed, et al., 2017). However, reading should start at an early age and sustain for a lifetime (Daniel et al., 2017). Although reading for academic purposes is vital, there are several advantages to students reading in their spare time outside of school. Studies have shown that leisure reading is a crucial factor in helping students improve their fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, writing ability and enhance general knowledge (Ho & Lau, 2018; Juriati et al., 2018). Reading skills can be seen as a required tool for an individual to successfully engage in social life (Williams, 2017). People who possess good reading skills are eligible to have better job opportunities (Ene, 2017).

Leisure reading contributes to critical cognitive consequences which may result in behaviours that influence the rest of the academic life of students. In fact, students improve their critical thinking and problem-solving through reading

processes as a result of using their cognitive skills such as imagination, analysis, judgement and creativity (Husna, 2019; Igwe, 2011). Students who read regularly grow into self-sufficient readers because frequent reading improves the development of reading competence (Schiefele et al., 2012). Reading, therefore, can be seen as a vital aspect that leads to the intellectual and emotional development of students, as well as paving the way for lifelong learning (Erdem, 2015). However, reading does not become a 'habit' unless it is carried out regularly. When reading is carried out persistently, constantly and critically, it is called 'a habit' (Erdem, 2015). These habits are measured in terms of the frequency, the number of materials as well as the time spent on reading (Fatiloro, Adesola, & Adewumi, 2017). Leisure reading is concerned with knowledge and information obtained from various reading materials such as books, newspapers, magazines and other electronic resources. Students who read enough are more likely to become proficient readers (Krashen, 2009). Their reading skills assist them in thoroughly comprehending knowledge and information (Annamalai & Muniandy, 2013).

Leisure reading is indispensable to academic success (Anderson, 2015; Daniel et al., 2017; Sikora et al., 2019; Whitten et al., 2019). Tertiary academic achievement has many qualities that include accurate use of the language, effective study skills, efficient learning and the personal attributes of students. These qualities can be achieved through good reading habits (Diwan, 2020). The reading habits and attitudes of college students necessitate deliberate effort and frequent involvement in the task of reading (Applegate & Applegate, 2004). Hence, students' aspirations, such as academic achievement and future career ambitions, reflect their perception of the importance of reading.

Reading attitudes are closely linked to reading habits. Reading attitudes refer to the feelings and emotions related to reading which cause the reader to approach or avoid a reading situation. Attitude has three central dimensions concerning feelings, cognitive beliefs about a certain behaviour and behavioural beliefs (Lee & Schallert, 2014). Positive reading attitudes are central to students' academic success (Samsuddin & Aspura, 2021). Studies have shown that students who have a positive attitude towards reading tend to read more frequently and develop reading proficiency (Kim, 2016; Ro & Chen, 2014). According to studies in the United

States, students' attitudes toward reading are deteriorating as they get older (Baba & Affendi, 2020). Therefore, studying students' reading attitudes is essential because reading attitudes have a strong impact on reading skills and proficiency, as well as lifelong reading and learning (McKenna et al., 2012)

Leisure reading is declining among university students. Students are more likely to spend their leisure time accessing the internet and technological devices such as computers and televisions rather than reading (Obaidullah & Rahman, 2018). Annamalai and Muniandy (2013) found that reading is not a favourite activity among most students. Instead, students prefer to surf the internet and check their Facebook accounts and other activities including, listening to music, playing games and watching television. Similarly, Huang et al. (2014) in their study of reading habits revealed that students in the United States spend an average of 4.24 hours on extracurricular reading and 8.95 hours per week on Facebook. Moreover, students spend much time playing computer games, as a result, the time spent on leisure reading is shrinking and reading skills are deteriorating (Duncan et al., 2016).

In Malaysia, reading habits research caught the attention of researchers who have devoted their time to studying the reading habits and attitudes of university students (Abidin et al., 2011; Ahmed, 2016; Annamalai & Muniandy, 2013; Baba & Affendi, 2020; Baharuddin & Kadir, 2015; Karim & Hasan, 2007; Mohamed et al., 2012; Pandian, 1997). According to a survey done by Central Connecticut State University (2016) on 61 nations, Malaysia was ranked sixth from the bottom in the World's Most Literate Nation (WLMN) assessment (Hassan et al., 2019). This is a highly critical issue that requires immediate action from parents, teachers, school administrators, educational practitioners and the government. Thus, it is important to understand what factors influence students' engagement in leisure reading activities since leisure reading enhances students' knowledge and boosts the quality of learning.

1.2 Problem Statement

As part of education, reading is one of the most essential skills. However, reading habits are undergoing tremendous changes in the world of technology. In the last two decades, developments in information and communication technology have dramatically altered how and what we regularly read (Putro & Lee, 2017). Studies have shown that adolescents are eager users of technology and use the internet in all aspects of their lives (Mullis et al., 2017). Merga and Moon (2016) suggest that while teens have access to technology like television, smartphones, and the internet, they are more likely to spend their free time on such gadgets rather than reading books. The propensity of the young generation to use these media devices for entertainment has affected their reading habits and types of selected materials (Naseri & Noruzi, 2016). A study done by Erdem (2015) on university students' reading habits showed that students could not spare time for reading because they are engaged with social media sites and other technological activities.

Notably, the downward trend of reading habits of college students was witnessed in the United States of America by research carried out by National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), in 2008, it was (51.7%) compared to 1982 with (59.8%). Owusu-Acheaw (2016) found that 81.92% of students in Ghana have not read any novel or fiction in the past year. He confirmed that the poor pattern of reading habits of students was related to their time spent on social media. Similarly, Huang et al. (2016) in their study of reading habits revealed that students in the United States spend an average of 4.17 hours on extracurricular reading and 16.40 hours per week on Facebook. Okolo and Ivwighreghweta (2020) state that the majority of students do not read daily unless there is a need to read. Further, Hejase et al. (2020) revealed, in a comparison study between Lebanese and French reading habits, that both Lebanese and French showed a decline in reading rates with an estimated 11.5% of Lebanese and 3.8% of French not reading at all. A recent study in the US among 12th-grade students showed that reading books and magazines declined from 60% in the late 1970s to 16% in 2016 with the adoption of digital media which replaced the traditional media (Twenge et al., 2019).

In Malaysia, studies have shown that there is a poor trend in university student reading habits and attitudes. A study done by Pandian (1997) on the reading habits of university students in Malaysia revealed that around 80% of students were reluctant readers. They can read but opt not to read lengthy texts, restricting their reading to social media short texts. As a result, reading comprehension is declining among university students in Malaysia (Edward et al., 2021). Students struggle to grasp the primary idea when reading, have a limited vocabulary, have a poor reading habit, and are disinterested in reading. The lack of vocabularies and poor reading habits result in challenges in comprehending texts and affect the reading proficiency of students (Musa et al., 2012).

According to Another study conducted by Annamalai and Muniandy (2013) on polytechnic students' reading habits and attitudes revealed that students have a negative attitude towards reading and enjoy other technological activities rather than reading. A study done by Ahmed (2016) on reading habits and attitudes in Universiti Malaysia Sabah Kampus Antarabangsa Labuan (UMSKL) found that the majority of students spent their free time surfing the net and watching television while students spent the least amount of their free time reading. He adds that students do not enjoy reading and face anxiety and difficulty in reading. A more recent study at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) in Melaka revealed that university students have poor reading habits (Abu Bakar, 2019).

Malaysia has taken many initiatives to promote reading practices and literacy programmes, such as the Harmonious Family Education Programme, Reading Programme and Functional Literacy Program especially by the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Human Resources, Ministry of Youth and Sports and Ministry of Information, Communications and Culture (Wei & Pandian, 2012). Despite the government's attempts to instil reading habits, not very much is known about how much students read and what they read. How do they prefer to spend their free time? Is 'reading' an activity they enjoy? and How much time do they spend reading? (Baharuddin & Kadir, 2015). Is this also applicable to Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM)? To the best of knowledge, no recent study has been done to investigate leisure reading habits and the factors that influence reading habits among UTHM undergraduates.

Since the medium of learning and teaching at universities in Malaysia is English, students must master the skills of the language namely: reading, speaking, listening and writing. Students at Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM) must pass English course before enrolling in their respected fields. In this course they are exposed to four English skills incorporating effective reading. However, according to the results, over 30% of the students were unable to acquire at least 18 out of 30 marks in order to receive a C+ on the test (Ngadiran, 2020). Thus, it is important to investigate the students' reading habits and the factors that influence their reading habits.

Although the reading habits research has gained attraction at present, there have been limited studies exploring the leisure reading habits and attitudes among university students. Furthermore, studies on reading habits and attitudes among university students (Ahmed, 2016; Annamalai & Muniandy, 2013; Samsuddin et al., 2019) have looked at attitude from one dimension (i.e., affective domain) and lack the examination of the relationship between several factors which influence reading habits, such as subjective norms that are related to people's belief that important persons support a particular behaviour and perceived behavioural control of reading which refer to a person's ability to perform a certain behaviour.

Attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control are three important factors that influence reading habits. These factors are interconnected; they all influence individuals' behaviour. The change in behaviour is attributed to these factors. In other words, behaviour changes depend on changes in attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 2020). Most studies that addressed reading habits in Malaysia have focused on attitude and did not touch on subjective norms and perceived behavioural control as determinants of reading behaviour. Therefore, this study addressed the other factors that have influence on reading habits.

To improve upon past research, this study uses a theory-driven, social scientific, quantitative approach to study the variables affecting reading habits using a model based on the theory of planned behaviour.

Hence, this study is designed to investigate the leisure reading habits of UTHM students and the relationship between attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control and reading habits.

1.3 Research Objectives

This study aims to investigate the leisure reading habits of UTHM undergraduates while the specific objectives of this research are:

- 1- To investigate the reading habits of UTHM undergraduates.
- 2- To investigate students' reading attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control of reading amongst UTHM undergraduates.
- 3- To examine the relationship between reading attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control and reading habits amongst UTHM undergraduates.

1.4 Research Questions

The research questions of this study are:

- 1- What are the reading habits of UTHM undergraduates?
- 2- What are reading attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control to reading amongst UTHM undergraduates?
- 3- What is the relationship between reading attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control and reading habits amongst UTHM undergraduates?

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study is designed to understand leisure reading habits among UTHM undergraduates. Also, the study sheds light on the most important factors that influence UTHM students to engage in leisure reading as well as the relationship between these factors and their reading habits. A survey research method is applied to answer the research questions. A questionnaire is used for this study to obtain data on variables related to reading habits (attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control). The data is analysed through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 20 edition. The targeted population of this study is the undergraduates of UTHM, which is a well-known public university located in Batu Pahat, one of the main districts of the state of Johor in Malaysia. The university consists of 8 faculties specialising in engineering and technology.

1.6 Significance of the Study

1.6.1 Body of Knowledge

Generally, this study will contribute to the literature in the field of reading in the Malaysian context and the development of knowledge about reading. What this study adds to the literature is a more nuanced theoretical understanding of several important factors related to leisure reading among UTHM students. It will also give an overall picture of the reading habits and attitudes of university students. In addition, the study focuses on the relationship between reading attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control and students' reading habits to give a vision to researchers of these relationships. Moreover, the investigation of these relationships could help to determine which factors have more influence on students' reading habits.

1.6.2 Students

Particularly, this research will help the young generation, especially students, value the importance of reading in expanding their knowledge and literacy because reading keeps them updated with new information and ideas. It will make students rethink allocating specific time for reading until it becomes a habit. In addition, students can make use of their own media devices for reading by downloading e-book applications on their smartphones to refer to them during their leisure time. Further, it is important to note that as reading habits are developed, better traits of self-efficacy, self-esteem, self-assessment and self-awareness are also developed. These types of traits strongly influence positive learning outcomes.

1.6.3 Teachers and Educators

This study will also benefit teachers and educators to understand their students' reading habits. They can motivate their students to read because teachers have a great influence on students. They will have general knowledge about students' tendencies and types of reading materials preferred to provide them with meaningful materials. In addition, teachers and educators are allowed to evaluate the learning needs of students, improve teaching procedures and construct learning materials based on students' reading habits. Moreover, the outcome of this study may be useful to share with educators to help students identify weak reading practices that may be corrected. The answers to the research questions of this study may emphasize the need for developing better habits and more deliberate engagement in reading to help students become better learners.

1.6.4 Policy Makers

In addition, this research will benefit society and policymakers to reinforce positive reading attitudes by providing an active reading environment and encouraging students to engage in reading campaigns and competitions for the betterment of the individuals and society. Since easy access to reading materials plays a critical role in improving students' reading habits, policymakers can work with book companies and educational publishers to produce more learning opportunities over the internet and create commercial software products to help students form solid and robust online reading habits. Moreover, this research will give an understanding of the current situation of reading among UTHM students.

1.7 Definition of Terms

1.7.1 Reading Habits

Reading habit depicts the behaviour which expresses the degree to which an individual enjoys reading of reading, types of reading and tastes of reading (Sangkaeo, 1999). In this study reading habits are measured in terms of the frequency of reading materials such as (magazines, comics, newspapers, novels, stories and websites) as well as the average time spent on reading (Fatiloro, Adesola, Hameed, et al., 2017).

1.7.2 Reading Attitudes

Attitude is defined as a person's beliefs, thoughts, feelings, and actions toward a certain subject, person, item, or event (Cherry, 2018). Reading attitudes in this context are measured with regards to the affective (feelings and emotions) and cognitive (evaluation and perception of the behaviour) dimensions of attitude using questionnaire items adapted from (Schooten & Glopper, 2002).

1.7.3 Subjective Norms of Reading

Subjective norms are a person's beliefs of social approval or disapproval for engaging in a certain behaviour (Cooke et al., 2016). In this context, subjective norms refer to students' parents, teachers and friends' beliefs about reading and the degree to which lecturers, parents, and friends believe a student should read using questionnaire items adapted from (Ho, 2016).

1.7.4 Perceived Behavioural Control

Perceived Behavioural Control represents an individual's beliefs of control over behavioural performance in the face of internal and external constraints (Cooke et al., 2016). "This construct is affected by perceptions of access to necessary skills, resources and opportunities to perform the behaviour" (Bidin et al., 2011). In this context, perceived behavioural control refers to students' perception of their ability in performing or avoiding reading and opportunities and obstacles to perform reading. The items for this construct are adapted from (Ho, 2016)

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PTTA UTHM
PERPUSTAKAAN TUNKU TUN AMINAH

APPENDIX C

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

- 1- Alsaeedi, Zubaidah Sadeq Ali, Nurizah Md Ngadiran, Zulida Abdul Kadir, Wahid Ali Hamood Altowayti, and Waleed Mugahed Al-Rahmi. "Reading habits and attitudes among University Students: A review." *Journal of Techno-Social* 13, no. 1 (2021): 44-53.
- 2- Alsaeedi, Zubaidah Sadeq, Nurizah Binti Md Ngadiran, Zulida Abdul Kadir, and Wahid Ali Hamood Altowayti. "An Overview of Reading Habits and Medium Preference Among University Students." In *2021 International Congress of Advanced Technology and Engineering (ICOTEN)*, pp. 1-5. IEEE, 2021.
- 3- Alsaeedi, Zubaidah Sadeq, et al. "Students' reading habits and attitudes." *Science and Development Conference in Yemen (CSDY) 2022*
- 4- Alsaeedi, Zubaidah Sadeq, Nurizah Md Ngadiran, and Zulida Abdul Kadir. "An investigation of UTHM undergraduates' reading habits through a pilot study." *Development in Language Studies* 2, no. 1 (2022): 30-35.

VITA

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