

Agricultural students and their academic performance: A study of students in Punjab, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Reading is considered as essential to develop the personality of human being. However, reading habits of human being especially young generation is at decline due to initiation of modern digital technologies like mobile phones, social networking on internet along with other ways of different entertainment. The study was conducted to assess the reading habits of the agricultural students of different universities in Punjab, Pakistan and identify the different ways of reading habit among students and obstacles in reading faced by students. The findings of the questionnaire showed the positive attitude of agricultural students in reading but they face some problems like no access of internet in Departments and computer laboratories especially in University of Sargodha and Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan. This study also attempts to give recommendations for improving the reading habits of students.

KEYWORDS

Reading habit, agricultural students, issues, recommendations

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Introduction

For having adequate learning, reading is compulsory. Continuous process of learning can be defined as holding, retrieval, attainment and efficient usage of accomplishments, power, knowledge and competencies. Learning can be gained by different ways with various methods, aims, levels, acceleration, areas, frequencies, and with different conditions (Shastri, 2015).

Prominent way of getting knowledge is studying continuously throughout the life (Birch et al., 2015). For an individual, to have vital consideration capacity and

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original force, studying help out as inexplicit exercise. Therefore habit of studying considered as an important source for the enhancement of mental capacity, self traits, acquiring information, understanding and knowledge of an individual (Clark and Rumbold., 2006).

Academic accomplishments of a student can be found through his habit of reading. Academic awards and reading are connected and dependent on each other. Mostly, students come from various environments and places with different degrees of academic awards. This is the reason, due to which difference stands in their studying habits. Anyhow some of them have extra ordinary reading habits and others show low level of their studying habits. Achievements in academics mean that how much education/knowledge, an individual gained from school (Bashir and Mattoo, 2012).

For having an educated society in this universe, an individual should have an adequate habit of reading. It develops individual's personality and help to have proper thinking ways, and develop new ideas. In this era, advancement in mass media continuously affecting the reading interest of individuals towards journals, magazines and books (Palani, 2012).

Lack of appropriate reading habits leads students to have miserable performance in class tests and final exams. For first-class presentation of your abilities on each side, there is extra ordinary need of reading habit. Now-a-days watching video-CDs, listening to audio-CDs, watching television and different useless shows on television and movies are first and ever priority of most students (Issa et al., 2012).

Agriculture is a milestone for developing the economy rate of any nation. Agricultural performance of Pakistan is low as compared to developed countries (Khan et al., 2011). Agriculture is a useful subject for any nation, because students can understand the importance of agriculture for their families and nation (Muchiri et al., 2013). Nowadays, poor performance of most students observed in final exams. One of the most important issues with students in present era is possibly not their incompetency in reading but also their poor interest. From the above assertion, this study is conducted to know about the reading habits among the students of agriculture in Pakistan and the issues on their performance in their institutions.

Research questions

The objective was achieved based on following questions:

- (1) What is the purpose of reading?
- (2) What are the sources of information?
- (3) What is the favorite past time of students?
- (4) What are the obstacles in reading among students?

Methodological Framework

The survey research of reading habits of agricultural students was conducted in four different universities, University of Sargodha (UOS), university of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF), Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan (BZU) and PMAS-Arid Agricultural University Rawalpindi (PMAS-ARID).

Questionnaire was used to collect data from respondents. Total 200 male and 200 female graduate students were selected as respondents from each university. The statistical analysis of data was computed using Minitab 16.1 software. data Each item was evaluated on the base of percentile values. The percentage was used to analyze the data (Shastrri, 2015).

Results

The result showed that, students read books not only for knowledge but also many other purposes. Maximum students read books to develop life. In comparison of genders for purpose of reading as to develop life, the maximum percentage of female students was observed (68%, 62%) in UAF and PMAS-ARID universities respectively. The results showed that both male and female students prefer text books more as compared to fiction and non-fiction in all four universities. The majority of respondents read books for 1-2 hours. Maximum respondents in UAF (62% male) were observed who read books for 1-2 hours and 49% female respondent read books for 2-4 hours in UAF (Table 1). The newspaper reading habit was almost similar among respondents of all universities. Majority of respondents regularly read newspaper for less than an hour. Except in case of respondents (72% male and 49% female) of UAF read newspaper for about 1 hour.

Table 1. Types and duration of reading of respondent's percentage from different

	UOS		BZU		UAF		PMAS-ARID	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Purpose of reading								
Pass exams	24	32	22	42	22	6	32	12
For fun	6	8	18	4	6	4	8	4
Develop life	40	26	36	32	34	68	26	62
To get a job	35	34	24	22	38	22	34	22
Types of Books								
Fiction	10	10	12	12	6	12	18	4
Non-fiction	20	14	24	40	22	4	42	6
Text books	50	46	58	38	64	62	22	62
None	20	30	2	10	8	22	18	28
Duration of book reading								
< 1 hour	32	24	24	40	12	6	24	28
1-2 hours	40	36	20	38	62	22	36	33
2-4 hours	14	20	16	14	18	49	20	32
4-6 hours	6	12	14	4	6	12	12	4
> 6 hours	8	4	14	4	2	11	4	3
Newspaper read habit								
Yes	54	48	42	26	68	49	49	66
No	12	6	18	40	6	17	34	12
Not regular	34	26	36	34	26	34	17	22
Duration of newspaper reading								
< 1hour	86	54	62	42	24	44	42	78
1 hour	10	24	18	22	72	49	22	18
2 hours	4	32	20	36	4	7	36	4

universities



Library is an important source of reading for respondents (72% male and 82% female) in UAF as compared to other universities. Internet is the important source of information for respondents of other universities. Now a day, internet is a major source of information and entertainment. Majority of respondents use internet regularly. The majority of respondents use internet for 2 hours daily, except in case of male respondent (72%) of UAF (Fig. 1). The places to access internet is important for student where they use internet to read articles, books, online journals and download text. The majority of respondents (70% male and 56% female) of UOS and 86% female respondent of BZU use internet at home (Fig. 2,3). It is noticeable that students (68% male and 49% female) use internet at central library in UAF.

The results showed that highest number of students use internet for research purpose in all universities as followed by female respondent (39%) of UAF who use internet for sending and receiving e-mails. Table 2 shows that 84% male and 94% female respondents of UAF visit library as followed by 44% male and 66% female respondents of UOS (Fig. 3). In case of respondents of BZU, 48% male and only 22% female visit library every day. The majority of respondents read specific subject of study in library.

Table 2. Purpose and frequency of library visit of respondent's percentage from different universities

	UOS		BZU		UAF		PMAS-ARID	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Library visit								
Yes	44	66	48	22	84	94	46	72
No	56	34	44	78	16	6	54	28
Purpose of library visit								
To read specific subject of study	68	34	49	36	72	84	72	40
Copy reading material	2	18	22	16	4	2	22	18
Read newspaper	6	8	12	14	12	6	4	20
To use internet	22	2	8	0	8	0	2	0
Others	2	28	9	34	4	8	0	28
Library visit frequency								
Everyday	16	8	18	6	66	78	16	12
Once a week	60	32	30	26	22	12	37	39
Twice a week	14	28	28	2	6	6	43	14
Occasionally	10	30	24	66	6	4	13	30

The table 2 shows that 66% male and 78% female students of UAF visit library every day. In case of respondents of UOS, 60% male and 32% female, visit library once a week. The female respondent (66%) of BZU visit library occasionally. Maximum favorite time for students are sleeping and watching television in all universities. Table 3 shows that 26% male student of UOS believes that playing sport is a major obstacle in reading. 49% male and 72% female

respondents of UAF as followed by respondents (28% male and 37% female) from PMAS-ARID University choose homework assigned by teachers as an obstacle to reading.

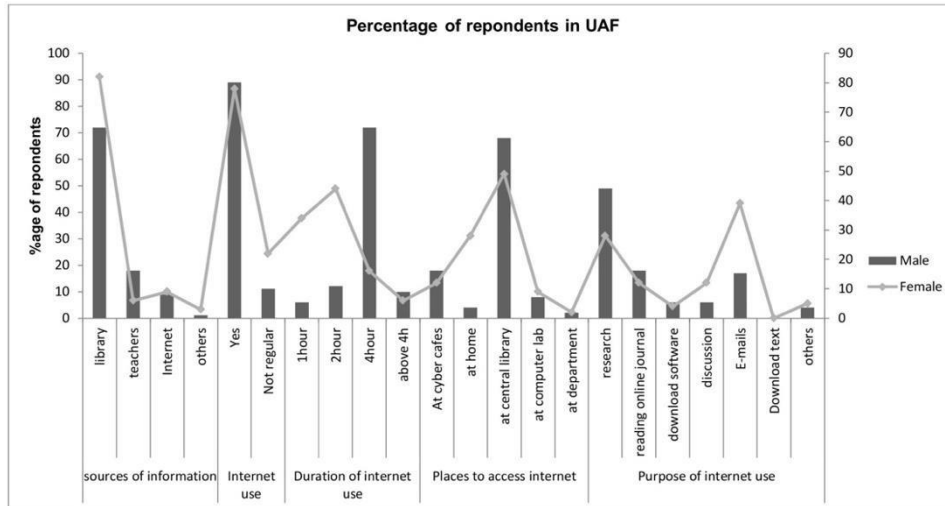


Figure 1. Percentage of respondents in UAF

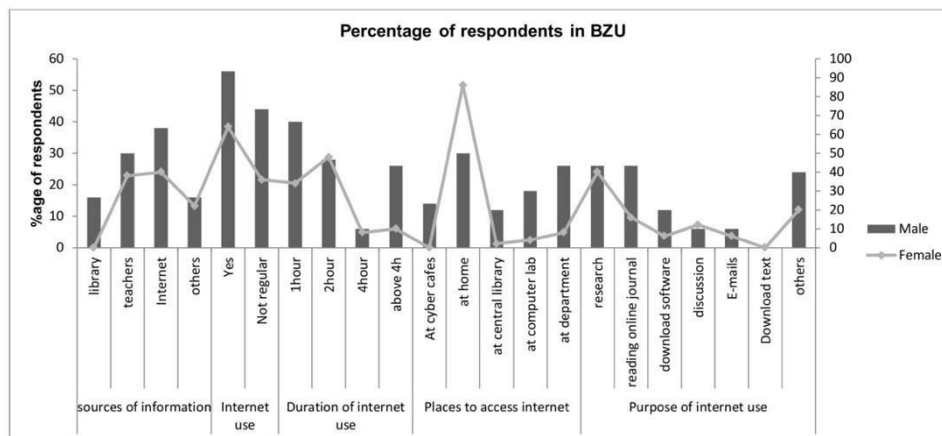


Figure 2. Percentage of respondents in BZU

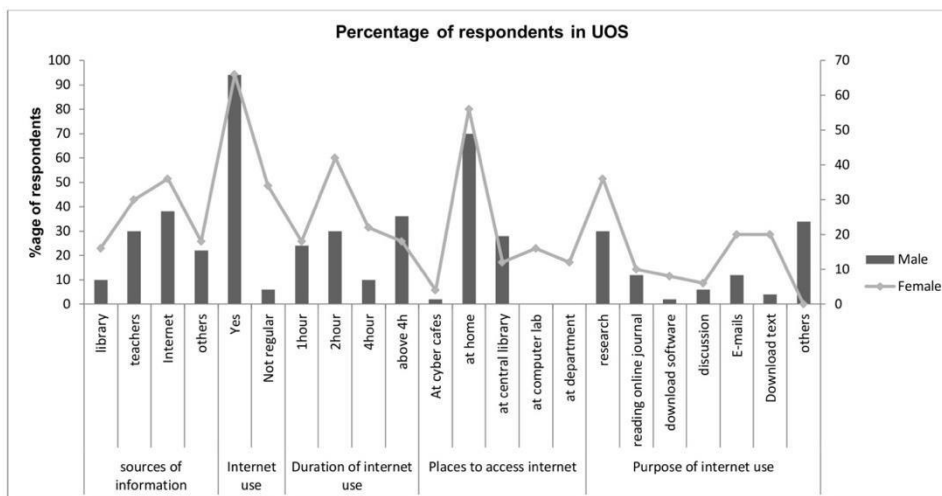


Figure 3. Percentage of respondents in UOS

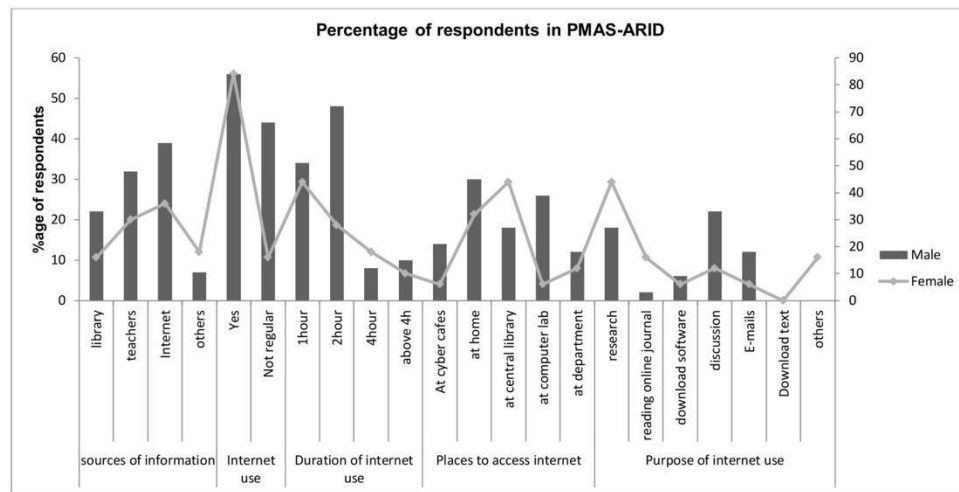


Figure 4. Percentage of respondents in PMAS-ARID

Table 3. Percentage of favorite past time and obstacles in reading between respondents of different universities

	UOS		BZU		UAF		PMAS-ARID	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Favorite past time								
Playing on computers	20	14	14	12	12	2	14	18
Sleeping	16	34	22	30	2	28	34	34
Watching TV	24	18	32	16	4	44	18	14
Reading books	14	12	10	16	32	18	12	12
Reading newspaper	6	4	4	0	6	4	4	4
Browse internet	20	18	22	26	44	4	18	18
Obstacles to reading								
Lack of reading material	10	18	16	22	0	4	22	33
Unavailability of books	14	16	24	12	2	4	32	6
Homework assigned by teachers	16	12	24	12	49	72	28	37
Unpaid tuition	0	0	2	0	4	4	3	9
Watching television	12	24	12	12	12	12	4	15
Playing sports	26	10	4	0	22	4	6	0
Others	24	20	18	42	11	0	5	0

Discussion

Reading is a leading gateway to the room of knowledge and is a long term habit which starts from early ages. Presumably as a practice that reading helps

people to acquire the creativity and develop their critical thinking skills (Clark and Rumbold, 2006).

Overall findings of the study reveal that the agricultural students from all universities have positive attitudes towards reading habits. But they aspect some difficulties like students have no internet access in Departments and at central library. Majority of students use internet at home. Nearly half of the students cannot read due to work assigned by teachers as followed by playing sports. That's why; they may not have sufficient time to read for pleasure. These results cannot be ascribed to negativity among reading habits. The majority of students from all universities claimed that they spent about two hours online every day. Vandenhoeck (2013) concluded that the total time which the students spend online may not seem a lot; the important point is, how they pass their time. The online articles, topics, study related subjects and websites that improve the knowledge of students should be determined to use web as a reading tool.

Online information is a wide category which includes different types of text available on the internet (Akyay and Ögeyik, 2009). The internet used for different purposes now a days like downloading text, chatting and discussion with friends and reading online journals, but the majority of students use internet for research purpose. Clark and Foster (2005) clarified that student read books and other material not for fun but mostly, they read to develop their lives and to get a suitable jobs.

The outcome of this survey is not very encouraging, because only a small percentage of the students read books for six or more hours a day. The majority of the agricultural students read books only for two to four hours a day. Similarly, reading of newspapers needs less time and give news and information on current affairs. Due to this reason, majority of the students read newspapers regularly. Most of them read newspapers for one to two hours every day (Anyachebelu et al., 2011). The use of library and reading habits are closely linked with each other. It is expected that one of the main factor of declining reading habit is the mostly students don't visit the libraries due to using of digital technologies and different means of entertainment. However, the survey findings showed that a high percentage of students of University of Agriculture, Faisalabad visit the university library on a regular basis as compared to other universities. Students of University of Sargodha, Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan and PMASARID University Rawalpindi don't visit library regularly. It is possible that they lack helping materials and internet access in library. If the library could be improved by using collections, state of the art technologies, access of internet and manpower, majority of students will be attracted to it regularly (Shabi and Udofia, 2009).

Watching television is a favorite pastime for female students of all universities. This survey also found that most respondents prefer TV watching and playing sports to others pastimes and don't spend times in reading. Mostly, students use internet at home. According to the survey, there is no access of internet in computer lab and in Departments especially in University of Sargodha and Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan. The study confirms by Palani (2012) who concluded that due to the effect of the mass media, students don't show much interest in reading of books, journals and magazines. Loan (2009) concluded that the new implements of different technologies mobile phones, computers, cinemas, TV and internet have become 'time eating machines'.

Conclusion

Reading is very important for every human being. Reading gave information and new ideas to become a perfect in every aspect. If reading habits decline due to any reason, it should be improve with generating new ideas to facilitate the reading. It will take efforts to create atmosphere to reading at institutions, home,

libraries and workplaces to bring back the happy and golden days of reading.

Recommendations

Improving the reading habits among students is very important to build a strong and knowledge society. Reading is necessary because it is not only developing the individual life but also contribute towards socio-economic development of a country. To improve the reading habits among students, teachers and librarians have to attract young generation towards reading.

Different events like debate club, seminars, quiz competition, national and international conferences should be organized at institutions to increase the interest of students towards reading. Reading campaign should be started at institutions at weekly or monthly basis which could be heartened by award to students. Internet facility should be provided at computer lab and in Departments, so that the students can read online journals, text and study related subjects.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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