

Decline in Reading Culture: A Hindrance to Academic Achievement

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Abstract:

Reading is one of the four skills that play a vital role in language learning. A voracious reader is a critical thinker and good at linguistic skills. The twenty-first century witnessed a severe decline in reading habits in children and people of different age groups. As reading and academic achievements are interrelated, the decline in reading habits poses a threat to academic achievement. Easy access to digital platforms prevents students from reading books. This paper will explore the causes of the downward trend in reading habits and suggest measures to cultivate the habits among students for academic excellence by surveying the students and faculties of Kalahandi University located at Bhawanipatna in Kalahandi District of Odisha. The paper will integrate qualitative and quantitative methods to accomplish its objective.

Keywords: decline, reading habits, academic achievements

1. Introduction:

“Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man and writing an exact man”- Francis Bacon.

Reading is not only one of the four skills that help in language acquisition, communication, and sharing information and ideas, but it is also the primary source of knowledge acquisition. The cultivation of regular reading habits helps in achieving intellectual development, which is an important factor in personal and social development (Rising Kashmir, 2023). Reading is the capacity to understand words in printed or non-

printed material and use the information for self-improvement and advancement (Dadzie, 2008). According to Muogilim (2000), 'reading opens doors to the accumulated knowledge of centuries which helps to enrich illuminate the minds, and widen the mental and spiritual horizon of the reader because the continuous reading of material will serve as a means of strengthening the development of reading.' Tracy and Akande (2008) emphasize the role of reading and state, 'Reading forms part of entertainment that plays a crucial role in human development and life skills. Students with poor reading habits get terrible scores on their examinations, get effortlessly distracted, and eventually drop out of school.

However, the significant decline in reading culture at present is a matter of great concern. This paper will study the repercussions of declining reading habits in the digitalized world.

1.1. Research Problem: The decline in reading culture affects students' academic performance. Students who spend more hours using social media and mobile phones score less marks than students who spend fewer hours. Students need to cultivate a good reading habits for good academic performance. Hence, the problem 'Decline in Reading culture: A hindrance to academic achievement' arises.

1.2. Objectives of the Study:

The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

- i. To investigate the extent of the decline in reading culture among students.
- ii. To assess the impact of reduced reading on academic performance with a sample study of the students of Kalahandi University, Bhawanipatna
- iii. To identify the factors contributing to the decline in reading culture.
- iv. To suggest strategies and interventions to promote a resurgence in reading culture among students.

1.3. Research Methodology Used:

As per the study's requirements, 150 undergraduate and postgraduate students were chosen randomly from among three thousand students of Kalahandi University, Bhawanipatna.

The study has a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. In the quantitative method, questionnaires have been used for data collection. One hundred fifty students participated in the questionnaire. The questions relating to the topic were mailed to the respondents using Google Forms, and almost all the students responded. A qualitative method was used to collect data from secondary sources. Data were collected from ten university teachers through interviews to determine the reading status of teachers and their opinions on the reading habits of the students.

The data collected from the sample population were analyzed using SPSS software to identify correlations between reading habits and academic performance. The data have been presented in the form of seven graphs, one table, and textual descriptions. In conclusion,

research implications have been stated, and ways to improve reading habits have been recommended.

2. History of Reading:

The history of reading dates back to the invention of cuneiform scripts. The writing and reading evolved at the same time. The great general Alexander read a letter sent by his queen silently without moving his tongue. This encouraged silent reading later.

In the 5th century BCE, the famous Greek historian Herodotus used the platform of the Olympics to read his latest works. Authors' readings were a social convention in Rome as early as the first century CE. Even as education became more widespread, being read to was a major avenue for entertainment and acquiring knowledge, especially for women. Women's reading and intellectual ambition were discouraged, often violently, in societies all over the world despite some of the earliest poets and authors having been women. Yet, largely cut off from the outer world and forced into the routines of domesticity, generations of women taught themselves to read and write.

3. Reasons for the decline in Reading Culture:

3.1 Technological distractions:

Gradually, reading habits have decreased among students and people for several reasons. The main reason for the decrease in reading habits and reading hours is due to distractions caused by excessive use of mobile phones for social media. Due to technological development, reading habits are changing. In society today, while technology is slowly taking steady control over individual lives, the reading habit is quickly vanishing into thin air. Students now lack the skill of reading habit; instead, they spend more hours on electronic media.

3.2. Job Entrance Examinations:

In addition to the technological factors, other factors also contribute to the decline in reading culture. According to Sahid Quereshi, in recent years, a concerning decline in reading culture has become evident among individuals, particularly among boys. This shift can be attributed to the growing trend of confining studies solely to job entrance examinations and the pervasive influence of smartphones.

3.3. Lack of emphasis on reading in the education system:

The educational institutions do not stress reading skills as they do in the case of writing and speaking. Reading skills are not a part of the test in term-end examinations in most higher education institutions. The lack of emphasis on reading cannot boost the interest of the students.

3.4. Lack of Interest:

A study by university college London has suggested that heavy use of social media can cause lower literacy level in children. Based on 11,000 children tract from their birth in

2009, time spend on social media distracts children from reading and homework, thus harming their literacy.

Poor reading habits and excessive use of mobile phones are detrimental, especially to students. In order to determine the facts, this research used a sample of 150 students from both undergraduate and postgraduate classes at Kalahandi University. The questionnaire had 14 questions that inquired about various aspects relating to reading. Most of the students answered almost all of the questions. The case study produced the desired results. The responses of the respondents have been represented through seven graphs and a table. The following is the interpretation of the data.

4. Data Analysis and Findings :

The following Graphs and table show the Reading Culture of students of Kalahandi University, Bhawanipatna

Total Respondents: 150(includes both UG and PG Students)

The query relating to the duration of study by the students has been represented in Figure 1. 18 students out of 150 respondents have not responded to this question. It is a serious concern that 12 students do not read more than 2 hours a day. About 41 students read between 2 to 4 hours daily. It is a good sign that 50 students read between 4 to 6 hours and 17 students read more than six hours a day. Only 12 students are serious readers who study more than eight hours a day. This is consoling because students of Kalahandi University read daily, although there are only a few serious readers. However, it is yet to be certain whether they read textbooks, notes, or other books online or physically.

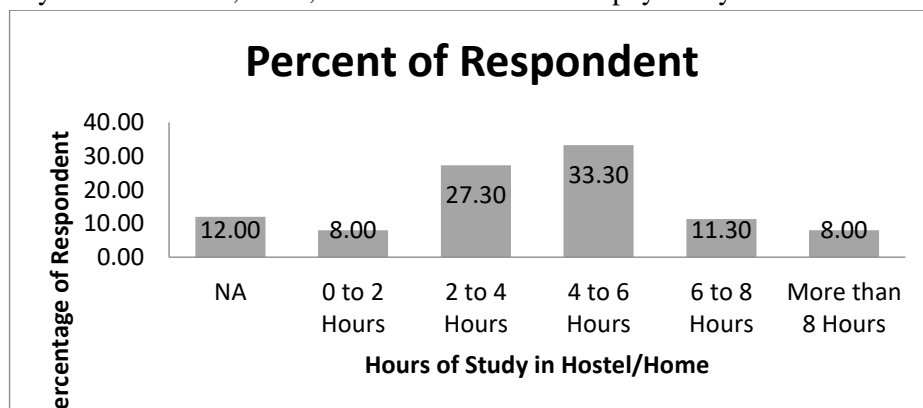


Fig- 1

Source: Questionnaire

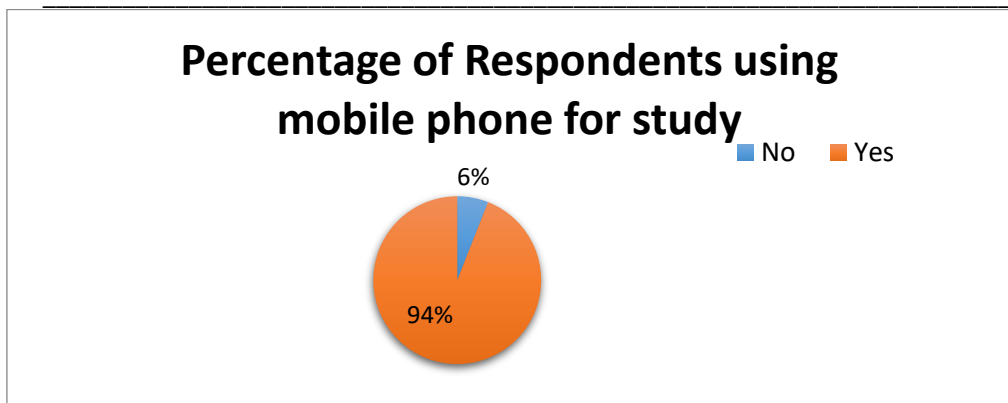


Fig-2

Figure 2 is a surprising revelation. One hundred and forty-one students use mobile phones to study. This clearly implies the dependence of students on mobile phones for study. It is evident that only nine students read the printed books or written notes. The statement by some teachers that most of the students do not possess textbooks is supported by this graph. The teachers, when interviewed, expressed their dissatisfaction that the students passed their examinations without a detailed study of textbooks.

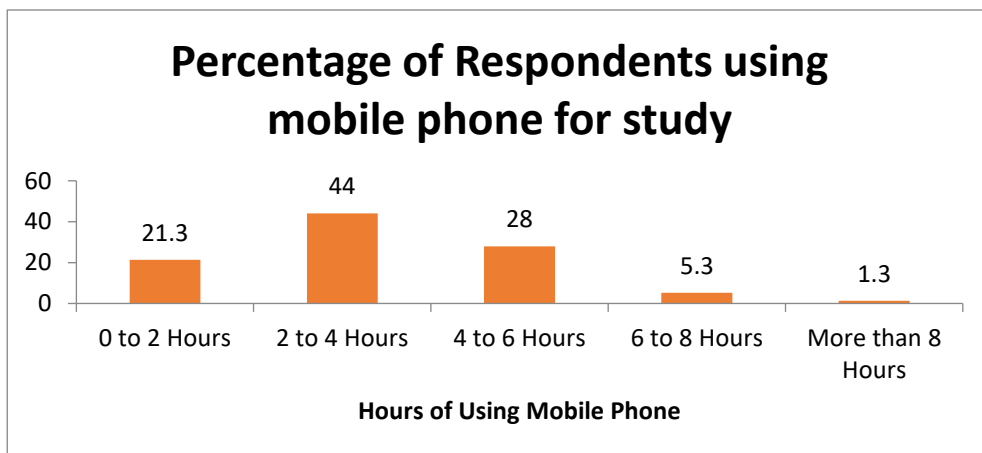


Fig-3

The research tried to find out if students spend time on mobile phones during their studies (Fig. 3). It was found that only 21.3 percent of students use mobile phones for up to two hours. The majority of students use mobile phones for their studies for between 2 and 4 hours. It is also seen that eight students use mobile phones for nearly eight hours to study. This is a clear indication that students do not possess books for study. Figure 4 shows that 135 students use social media. There is a consolation that 15 students are still not using social media. Nearly 89 students spend approximately two hours on social media every day. It is a

matter of concern that nearly seven students use social media for six hours a day. A student who is engaged in social media for more than two hours cannot concentrate on studies.

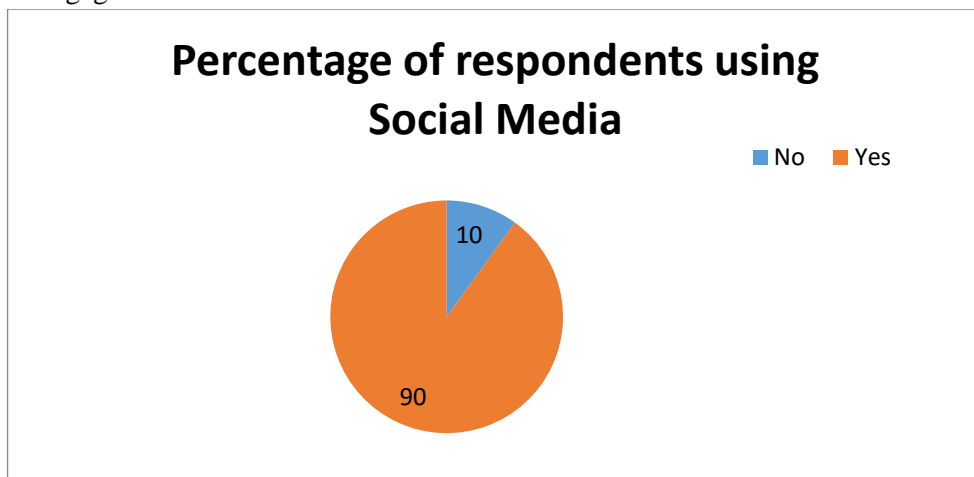


Fig-4

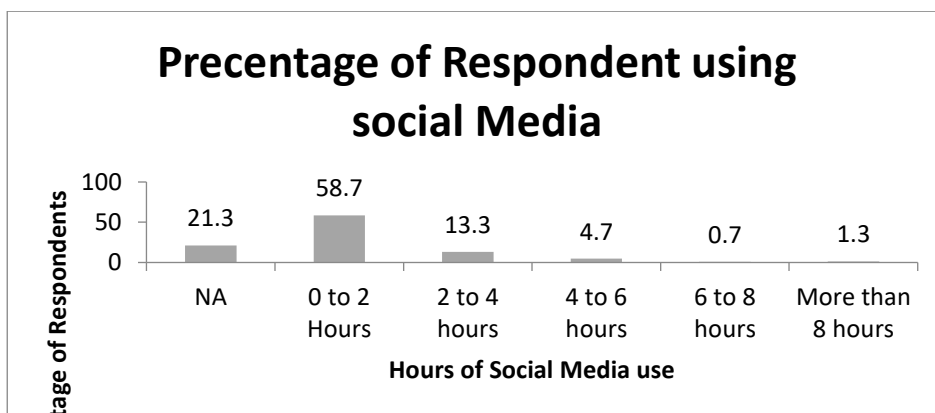


Fig-5

| Hour of Study | % of respondents using Social Media | % of respondents using Social Media |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| NA | 46.7 | 8.1 |
| 0 to 2 Hours | 0 | 8.9 |
| 2 to 4 hours | 6.7 | 29.6 |
| 4 to 6 hours | 20 | 34.8 |
| 6 to 8 hours | 13.3 | 11.1 |
| More than 8 hours | 13.3 | 7.4 |

Table-1

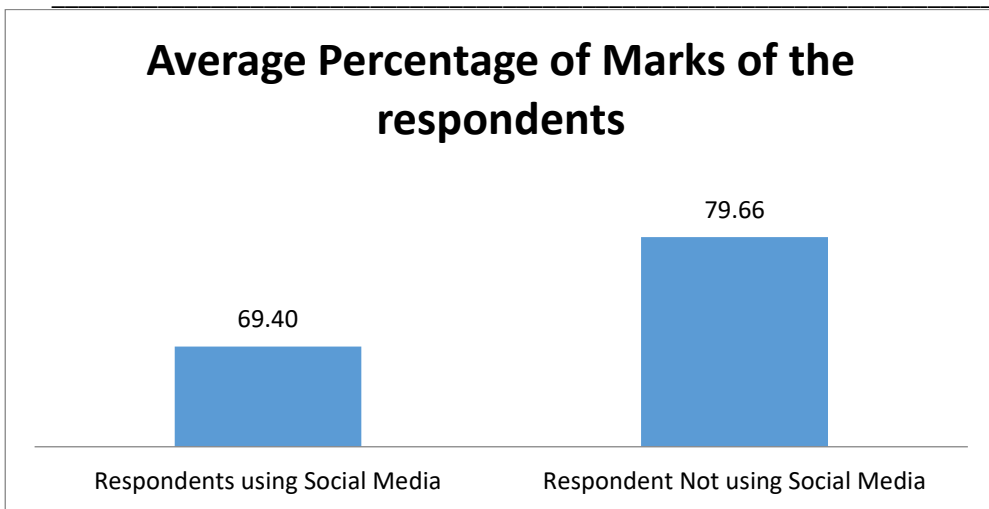


Fig-6

The objective of the study is to show that a voracious and consistent reader scores over a less dedicated and inconsistent reader. A student who is distracted by mobile phones and social media is likely to be a poor performer in academics. Figure number 6 clearly indicates that the respondents who used mobile phones and social media for more hours scored 69.40 percent in the term-end examinations, and the respondents who did not use or use for less hours in social media scored 79.66 percent marks in final examinations. The students who score fewer marks do not spend more time reading, and the result is obvious. The students who spend time using mobile phones for two hours get an average mark of 69.14 percent marks. There is no more difference in marks for the students who use mobile phones for up to four hours. However, respondents using more than 4 hours scored as low as 65.8 %, and students giving more than six hours fetched average marks of 53 percent (Fig. 7). The study revealed that academic performance is affected if there is a decline in reading.

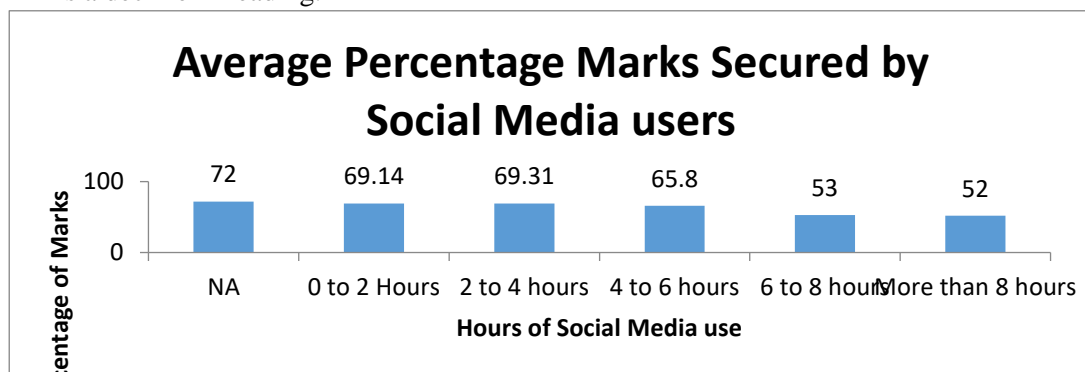


Fig-7

The other responses to the questionnaire questions have not been represented in the form of graphs or diagrams. Those responses are of significance for this research. The responses to question number 4 state that many students depend on notes rather than books. The teachers in the interview revealed that more than 90 percent of students do not buy textbooks. The students depend on the notes provided by teachers or internet materials. Because of the lack of study of textbooks, the students cannot attempt annotations very often, and their answers are not critical. The responses to the query regarding the reading of books, novels, plays, and stories other than textbooks are disheartening. Very few students have read one or two books for pleasure or knowledge in the last two months. The majority of students have not studied any book in the last few months. However, almost all the respondents agree that there is a decline in reading habits among students, and they admit that reading textbooks and other books would help them prosper academically.

Conclusion and Recommendation: The case study of the students of Kalahandi University reveals that there is a marked decline in their reading habits. The majority of the students look for a shortcut to meet their academic requirements with minimum reading efforts, barring those who are passionate about learning the subjects deeply. For academic prosperity, reading habits are to be encouraged to address the decline of reading. Promoting a culture that values and celebrates books and reading is essential. Reading can be promoted through educational programs, public campaigns, and community events that encourage reading habits and make it more accessible and enjoyable. The role of the teachers, the parents, and the social thinkers is very important in the promotion of reading habits among the students. Parents need to emphasize reading books other than textbooks and exam-oriented books. The institutions need to create awareness among the students regarding book reading and its effect on academic achievement. Parents and teachers are required to evolve techniques to deal with the overuse of mobile phones by providing interesting books that motivate them to read for their knowledge and entertainment.

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