



Reading Habits of Freshmen of Gedu College of Business Studies

Chencho Wangchuk^{1*}, Nima Wangchuk¹, Dhanapati Sharma¹ and Phub Dorji¹

¹Gedu College of Business Studies, Royal University of Bhutan, Bhutan.

Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Author CW designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Authors NW and DS managed the analyses of the study. Author PD managed the literature searches. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Article Information

DOI: 10.9734/AJARR/2020/v13i130296

Editor(s):

(1) Dr. Fagbadebo Omololu Michael, Durban University of Technology (DUT), South Africa.

Reviewers:

(1) Liqaa Habeb Al-Obaydi, University of Diyala, Iraq.

(2) Abdelaziz Mohammed, Albaha University, Saudi Arabia.

Complete Peer review History: <http://www.sdiarticle4.com/review-history/59459>

Original Research Article

Received 20 May 2020
Accepted 25 July 2020
Published 05 August 2020

ABSTRACT

Aim: The main purpose of this study was to determine college students' attitude towards reading against the backdrop of perceived poor habit of reading among Bhutanese students and evidences showing decline in attitude towards reading observed among students as they matured.

Study Design: Descriptive survey.

Place and Duration of the Study: Gedu College of Business Studies (GCBS), a constituent college under the Royal University of Bhutan, during the 2019 academic session.

Methodology: The authors administered Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) questionnaire to 500 freshmen.

Results: A descriptive statistical analysis of questionnaires returned revealed a positive attitude towards reading. Specifically, from the two types of reading, the respondents preferred recreational reading slightly more than the academic reading. In addition, an independent-samples *t*-test revealed a statistically significant attitudinal differences between genders towards reading. In both cases, female-respondents were found more positive towards both recreational and academic reading than their male counterparts.

Conclusion: Analysis of the data revealed that the freshmen of GCBS held positive attitude towards reading with slight preference being given to recreational reading. Also, from the two genders, independent-samples *t*-test showed that females were more positive towards reading than males.

*Corresponding author: Email: chenchow15@gmail.com;

Keywords: Reading; attitude; Bhutanese students; college students.

1. INTRODUCTION

Of the four language skills, reading is often investigated by scholars because it is considered the most important skill [1,2,3] that significantly affects students' speaking and writing skills [4,5], academic achievements [6,7,5], and communicative competence [8,5]. In addition, according to [5], reading also broadens minds and nurtures good personal characteristics as does [9] regard it as key to "unlocking the vault of the wisdom of the race" (p. xxi). Erdem [10] also claims it as "the basis of lifelong learning" (p. 3984). These evidences may be the reasons why English curricula mandate both English language teachers and their students to fulfill the prescribed standards for reading [see 9] in all Bhutanese schools.

In spite of these evidences, many students do not seem to show interests in reading, and one factor which either encourages or discourages reading among students is known to be their attitude. Because, as Smith [11] notes, "emotional response to reading . . . is the primary reason most readers read, and probably the primary reason most nonreaders do not read" (p. 177), many scholars have investigated it quite extensively in numerous contexts [e.g., 12,13,14,5].

Although girl-participants in [13], [15], and [16] were found more positive towards reading than boys, they, however, reported a decline in students' attitude towards reading as they progressed from low to higher grades. Reasons for this decline could include finding reading activity difficult and availability of alternative learning platforms such as internet, computer or mobile games and music [16], decline in reading culture with maturity [13,15], and watching home videos [17].

While Sheu [18], Hurst [19], and Lee [20], on the other hand, found their interventions more influential in sustaining students' attitude towards reading. In other words, these researchers observed positive attitude towards reading after the administration of interventions such as reading graded readers (GR) and books for native English-speaking children (BNESC), and freedom to choose books of one's choice and availability of dictionaries, attendance in qualified reading-teacher's reading class, and Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS). Wangchuk [5] also reported a similar finding from their in-

class reading sessions. Inclusion and practice of reading strategies in their daily in-class reading sessions have improved speaking and writing skills, enhanced learning other academic subjects, broadened minds, and developed good personal characters of the participants.

However, little is known about Bhutanese college students' attitude towards reading despite studies that claimed lack of reading among Bhutanese students. For example, the [21] and [22] reported low performances among Bhutanese students in English. Also, the PISA-D report revealed Bhutanese students' average literacy of 45.34% below the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD] average though it was 4.08% higher than the averaged PISA-D solution rates (41.26%) of the eight countries which participated in the PISA-D in 2017 [23]. It also found Bhutanese students poor at performing tasks that required higher cognitive skills. Such performances may be attributed to poor habit of reading among Bhutanese students resulting in poor comprehension ability [24], adoption of intensive reading culture [14] aimed at scoring good grades in examinations, and poor home schooling [25].

Besides the studies that claim a decline in students' attitude towards reading as they progressed to higher grades [e.g.,16,13,15], there is also a perceived decline in habit of reading among Bhutanese students [26]. Therefore, this study aimed to determine general attitude of freshmen of Gedu College of Business Studies towards reading as it is attitude that significantly influences students' level of engagement with reading [27] and then their aptitude towards other academic engagements. The findings from this study would suggest language module tutors to institute in-class reading programs that would either assist the students to acquire or sustain their habit of reading. Further, they would advise module tutors to design activities that necessitate reading materials outside of the prescribed course packs so that students practice both intensive and extensive reading that fulfill both recreational and academic purposes.

1.1 Research Questions

1. What is the general attitude of freshmen of Gedu College of Business Studies (GCBS) towards reading?

2. Which of the two types of reading is more favored by the GCBS students?
3. What is the relationship between gender and attitude towards reading among GCBS students?

2. METHODS

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design that aimed to study the attitude of freshmen of GCBS towards reading. Descriptive survey is a research design that administers the same set of questions [28] in the form of print copies of the questionnaire in this case, for example.

2.1 Participants

Table 1 shows the total number of freshmen who participated in the study. They were studying at Gedu College of Business Studies (GCBS), Royal University of Bhutan, at the time of data collection.

Table 1. Demographic information of the respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	179	52.2
Female	164	47.8
Total	343	100.0

As shown in Table 1, from the total of 500 first year students at that time, 343 of them responded to the survey questionnaires. From it, 52.2% (n=179) of them were males while 47.8% (n=164) were females.

2.2 Data Collection Tool

The data for this study were collected through a survey questionnaire. This questionnaire was adopted from [29]’s Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS), and it consisted of 20 items catering to two types of reading: recreational and academic. The questionnaire comprised two parts. Part I required the respondents to write their names (optional) and gender while Part II instructed them to rate their degree of happiness or sadness on a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being *Very Upset* and 4 being *Very Happy*.

In order to validate and contextualize the questionnaire, the researchers requested three experienced researchers to provide suggestions regarding its content relevancy, contextual

appropriateness, and language ambiguity. As there was not any suggestion from them, the researchers administered the same questionnaire developed by [29]. The questionnaire did not need pilot-testing as the reliability coefficients of the two subscales ranged from .74 to .89 [see 29] indicating a high reliability.

2.3 Data Analysis

The researchers used descriptive statistics: mean scores and standard deviation using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. Except for the demographic information, the descriptive statistics computed for the respondents’ ratings on 20 items are interpreted as per the following interpretation scale values adapted from [30].

In addition, an independent-samples *t*-test was performed to measure the relationship between gender and attitude towards reading.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the analysis of the data gathered through a survey questionnaire and their interpretations. Answers to research questions are presented in different subsections: The respondents’ attitude towards reading, their attitude towards recreational reading, their attitude towards academic reading, and the relationship between gender and attitude towards reading.

3.1 Respondents’ Attitude towards Reading

This section reports the respondents’ attitude towards reading. Specifically, it presents the respondents’ choices between reading materials, that are, recreational and academic, and it answers the first two questions: (1) *What is the general attitude of freshmen of Gedu College of Business Studies (GCBS) towards reading?* and (2) *Which of the two types of reading is more favored by the GCBS students?*

Generally, as shown in the Table 3, the respondents’ attitude towards reading was *positive*. This is because the average (M=3.07) of the recreational and academic reading fell between the range of 2.51 and 3.25 as shown in the interpretation of the scale values in Table 2. Therefore, the GCBS students’ attitude towards reading was positive. This finding suggests

academicians to create environments that not only engage students in reading, but also assist them in improving their academic performances and achievements. This result was somewhat expected as academic activities in the college required students to spend a significant amount of their leisure time on independent reading for academic purposes [10,12,]. On the other hand, this finding contradicts the findings of [13] and [15]. These studies observed a decline in attitude towards reading with maturity and academic progression. Neither does this finding support the neutrality of Turkish university students' attitude towards reading in English [7]. Prevalence of such inconsistencies may be caused by differences in social, cultural, and educational settings.

Table 2. Interpretation of the scale values

Scale	Range	Attitude
4	3.26-4.00	Very Positive
3	2.51-3.25	Positive
2	1.76-2.50	Negative
1	1.00-1.75	Very Negative

Specifically, from the two types of reading, the respondents slightly favored recreational reading (M=3.10) over academic reading (M=3.04). This meant the respondents loved reading for pleasure and general knowledge than for academic purpose thus disapproving the finding of [12].

Table 3. Respondents' attitude towards reading

Reading Attitude	Mean	SD
Recreational	3.10	0.815
Academic	3.04	0.802
Total	3.07	0.809

3.2 Respondents' Attitude towards Recreational Reading

Table 4 reports the respondents' ratings for recreational reading. From the ten items under recreational reading in Table 4, the respondents' attitudes were *very positive* towards five items as they fell between 3.26 and 4.00 as shown in Table 2. In other words, the respondents were *Very Happy* about reading different kinds of books, reading for fun at home, starting a new book, going to a bookstore, and getting a book for a present. Among them *How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?* was rated the highest with a mean of 3.45 (SD=0.695)

while *How do you feel about getting a book for a present?* received the lowest rating (SD=0.875).

While four other items fell between 2.51 and 3.25 as per Table 2. This meant that the respondents were *positive* towards spending free time reading a book, reading during free time in school, reading a book on a rainy Saturday, and reading during summer vacation. From this attitudinal positivity, it could be concluded that the respondents preferred extensive reading [12] to acquire knowledge [31] for academic purpose [32] and upscale skills that are essential for personal, social and professional growths [5,31,32].

On the contrary, the respondents were *Little Upset* about *How do you feel about reading instead of playing?* This meant, as their attitude was *negative* towards this item, the respondents preferred playing to reading, probably, because the former is physically, emotionally, and mentally engaging than the latter. However, it must be interpreted with caution as there were deviations between respondents' ratings.

3.3 Respondents' Attitude towards Academic Reading

Table 5 shows the ranking of the respondents' ratings towards academic reading. Generally, of the ten items under this section, the respondents' attitude towards academic reading fell under *very positive* and *positive* categories. In other words, the respondents were *very happy* and *little happy* towards these groups of items.

As ratings of three items fell between 3.26 and 4.00 as shown in Table 2, the respondents were *very positive* towards learning from books, using dictionary and reading stories in reading class thus substantiating the finding of [12]. To put it differently, the respondents were *very happy* about doing these activities in their classes. The ratings for other seven items fell between 2.51 and 3.25 (See Table 2). In this case, the respondents were *little happy* when doing these activities during their formal academic sessions. Therefore, as in [5], the attitudes of the respondents of this study were also *positive* indicating love for in-class reading time, reading schoolbook, in-school reading, reading workbook pages and worksheets, reading aloud in class, sharing about their reading, and doing reading tests.

All in all, the respondents demonstrated positive attitude towards academic reading. This may be because that educational stage was more engaging requiring a lot of reading [12] in enhancing their productive and receptive skills [8,33], raising their academic achievements [34,35], and then be able to “. . . participate meaningfully in a knowledge-based society” [36,p.38]. Also, as this finding indicated love for in-class reading, the English language teachers may adopt in-class reading practice [see 5] so that it not only influences students’ academic learning, but also promotes and sustains the habit of lifelong learning [10,31,32].

3.4 Relationship between Gender and Attitude towards Reading

To answer question three: What is the relationship between gender and attitude towards reading among GCBS students? an independent-samples *t*-test was conducted to determine the relationship between gender and its attitude towards reading. As shown in Table 6a and 6b, in case of respondents’ attitude towards recreational reading, the results of the

independent-samples *t*-test revealed statistically significant difference ($p < 0.004 < p < 0.05$) in mean recreational reading scores between males and females. This meant the female-respondents were *more positive* ($M=3.308, SD=0.397$) towards recreational reading than their male counterparts ($M=2.909, SD=0.489$).

Similarly, an independent-samples *t*-test was performed to compare the academic reading scores for males and females. This result revealed a statistically significant difference ($p.002 < p < .05$) in the mean academic reading scores between males and females, thus, revealing that females’ attitude towards academic reading was *more positive* ($M=3.113, SD=0.436$) than that of males ($M=2.971, SD=0.408$).

Overall, from the independent-samples *t*-test results of these variables, the females were found more positive towards both recreational and academic reading than males. This finding, therefore, supports the findings of [13], [15], and [16] which concluded the attitude of females as more positive towards reading than that of males.

Table 4. Respondents’ attitude towards recreational reading

Items of recreational reading	n	Mean	SD
How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?	343	3.45	.695
How do you feel about reading for fun at home?	343	3.42	.764
How do you feel about starting a new book?	343	3.36	.747
How do you feel about going to a bookstore?	343	3.26	.816
How do you feel about getting a book for a present?	343	3.26	.875
How do you feel about spending free time reading a book?	343	3.10	.780
How do you feel when you read a book in school during free time?	343	3.05	.820
How do you feel when you read a book on a rainy Saturday?	343	2.94	.870
How do you feel reading during summer vacation?	343	2.70	.858
How do you feel about reading instead of playing?	343	2.44	.921
Total	343	3.10	.828

Table 5. Respondents’ attitude towards academic reading

Items of Academic Reading	n	Mean	SD
How do you feel about learning from a book?	343	3.64	.574
How do you feel about using a dictionary?	343	3.41	.724
How do you feel about stories you read in reading class?	343	3.35	.692
How do you feel when it is time for reading in class?	343	3.14	.762
How do you feel about reading your schoolbook?	343	3.06	.785
How do you feel about reading in school?	343	3.03	.770
How do you feel reading workbook pages and worksheets?	343	2.78	.749
How do you feel when you read out loud in class?	343	2.77	1.009
How do you feel when a teacher asks you questions about what you read?	343	2.64	1.004
How do you feel about taking a reading test?	343	2.57	.949
Total	343	3.04	.802

Table 6(a). Relationship between gender and attitude towards reading

Group statistics					
Gender		n	Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error mean
Recreational Reading_Score	Male	179	2.90	0.489	0.037
	Female	164	3.31	0.397	0.031
Academic Reading_Score	Male	179	2.97	0.408	0.031
	Female	164	3.11	0.436	0.034

Table 6(b). Relationship between gender and attitude towards reading

Independent samples test										
		Levene's test for equality of variances			t-test for equality of means					
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. Error difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	
								Lower		Upper
Recreational Reading_Score	Equal variances assumed	8.62	.004	-8.24	340.00	.000	-.40	.05	-.49	-.30
	Equal variances not assumed			-8.32	335.56	.000	-.40	.05	-.49	-.30
Academic Reading_Score	Equal variances assumed	1.21	.271	-3.13	341.00	.002	-.14	.05	-.23	-.05
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.12	333.27	.002	-.14	.05	-.23	-.05

4. CONCLUSION

This study was conducted at Gedu College of Business Studies involving its freshmen. Based on the descriptive analysis of Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) questionnaire [see 29], it revealed that the attitude of GCBS freshmen was positive towards reading. From the two types of reading, the respondents slightly favored recreational reading over academic reading. Further, to ascertain attitudinal differences between the two groups of genders, an independent-samples *t*-test was performed. This test result showed the attitude of female-respondents more positive towards reading than their male counterparts.

5. LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was conducted at GCBS involving only freshmen. Therefore, it cannot be representative of all students studying at various constituent colleges of the Royal University of Bhutan. To know about Bhutanese college students' attitude towards reading, a large-scale study involving a representative sample of college students of the constituent colleges under the Royal University of Bhutan is recommended. Also, as quantitative nature of this study itself is its limitation, the researchers suggest a mixed-methods study. This is because, in addition to quantitative data sources, the qualitative data have additional potential for obtaining "... intricate details about phenomena such as feelings, thought processes, and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more convenient conventional research methods" [37,p.11]. Moreover, triangulation of data from these sources would provide "rich and holistic" [38, p.5] findings about the phenomenon.

CONSENT AND ETHICAL APPROVAL

After receiving the approval for the proposal from the college research committee, the researchers sought consent from all 500 freshmen. In the informed consent form was written the objectives of conducting this research. Also, they were advised to participate in it based on their willingness. Along with the consent forms was also sent a survey questionnaire each to all the freshmen. Of the total freshmen, 343 of them (68.6%) returned the questionnaires.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank Gedu College of Business Studies, Royal University of Bhutan, for supporting this study with funds from the college In-house Research Grant (IRG).

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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Peer-review history:
The peer review history for this paper can be accessed here:
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