

Reading Habits and Academic Performance of College-Level Students

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Abstract

The objective of the study is to examine the effect of reading habits on the academic performance of college-level students. Descriptive and causal research designs were adopted to deal with various issues in the study. The study adopted an online survey to collect primary data. The study targeted college-level students of Kathmandu Valley. 342 students have been selected through judgmental sampling. A structural questionnaire link using 'Google Forms' was sent to students through WhatsApp, Facebook, and email. Out of 390, a total of 342 students provided complete information regarding the survey. Various statistical tools were employed in the study such as frequency, percentage, mean, correlation, regression, etc., The study found that there is a strong relationship between reading habits and the academic performance of college-level students. The study also showed that reading habits have a positive and significant effect on the academic performance of college-level students. Similarly, gender does not affect reading habits but affects academic performance. As a result, reading plays an important role in the lives of students. Academic institutions must prioritize creating supportive environments such as well-equipped libraries, accessible reading resources, and study-friendly spaces to cultivate consistent reading behaviour, and teachers should play a more significant role in motivating students to read.

Keywords: *Academic performance, college-level students, home environment, library attendance, reading habits*

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Introduction

Reading plays a vital role in human life and is considered one of the most important components of language and education. It is a fundamental tool for acquiring knowledge, enhancing cognitive skills, and fostering personal development (Firnas et al., 2021). Reading habits are often measured by the frequency, duration, and type of material people read. For students, reading is crucial throughout their academic journey, serving as a primary instrument for gaining new knowledge and skills. It engages processes such as thinking, evaluating, judging, imagining, reasoning, and problem-solving, making it essential to creating a literate and informed society (Rabia et al., 2017). By shaping individuals' personalities and enhancing their intellectual capabilities, reading helps develop critical thinking and the ability to generate new ideas. A well-established reading habit contributes to academic success and increases self-confidence and self-esteem (Kwakye et al., 2020).

The importance of reading in improving the quality of life has been widely recognized. Padma et al. (2019) highlighted that 40% of people prefer spending their leisure time on reading activities, underlining the need to

cultivate and nurture reading as a habit. Daily reading influences students' study skills and academic performance (Issa et al., 2012). Good reading habits are closely linked to educational success, demonstrating the connection between consistent reading practices and better academic outcomes. Sharma and Vyas (2016) further emphasized the significance of study habits in determining students' success, noting that the achievements or failures of students often depend on their approach to studying and their commitment to consistent reading practices. Acheaw and Larson (2014) stated that 62.5% of respondents read novels or fiction, 62.0% of students believed they read lecture notes when visiting the library facility and 25.0% indicated they read textbooks.

Despite the widely acknowledged benefits of reading, there is an observable decline in reading habits among students, with digital distractions like social media playing a significant role. Social media platforms, while helpful in accessing current information and enhancing learning opportunities, often contribute to reduced reading time and fragmented attention. Nnaji et al. (2020) reported that over 50% of secondary school students are active (Adnan et al., 2016) and analyzed and portrayed the reading habits and Interests of Tangerang City's Community. The study revealed that 40% of people like to spend their leisure time on reading activities. Facebook users, yet a significant proportion of these students struggle to achieve high academic performance. The study also revealed that only 3.5% of students dedicate up to four hours a day to reading, while the majority spend one to three hours, indicating a troubling trend in reading engagement.

Moreover, the impact of social media on reading habits reflects broader issues related to students' educational environments, family backgrounds, and individual motivation. Akabuikie and Asika (2012) found that many students exhibit poor reading habits and negative attitudes towards reading, often reading only to pass exams rather than for pleasure or knowledge acquisition. Bano et al. (2018) identified several factors affecting students' reading habits, including school infrastructure, teacher engagement, and family support. These findings underscore the need to address the factors influencing reading behaviour and their impact on academic performance.

The shift in students' reading preferences towards digital materials reflects evolving educational practices. Bulusan et al. (2019) noted that students in multicultural classrooms prefer digital texts over printed materials, citing accessibility and convenience as key factors. Similarly, Kumara and Sampath Kumar (2019) observed that students tend to engage in extracurricular reading activities when not compelled by academic requirements, highlighting the role of voluntary reading in developing sustainable reading habits. People read books as extracurricular activities during their academic year (Yildiz, 2020).

Education remains a cornerstone of personal and societal development, providing individuals with the knowledge, skills, and habits necessary for success (Card, 1999). Effective study habits, including consistent reading, are essential for academic achievement, enabling students to retain and apply knowledge efficiently (Riaz et al., 2002). The global concern over declining educational standards has drawn the attention of researchers, educators, and policymakers, emphasizing the need to investigate the relationship between students' reading habits and their academic performance (Tenibiaje, 2009).

Despite the well-established importance of reading habits in shaping students' academic success, there is a growing concern over declining reading engagement among students, particularly in the context of developing countries like Nepal. The increasing influence of social media and digital entertainment, inadequate educational resources, and limited family support contribute to poor reading practices and suboptimal academic performance. This study aims to examine the relationship and effect of reading habits on the academic performance of college students.

Review of Literature

Several Reading habits are crucial in shaping students' academic performance and intellectual development. They are essential components of language acquisition and cognitive growth. These habits are often assessed through the frequency, duration, and variety of reading materials individuals engage with (Firnas et al., 2021). Reading transcends the simple act of decoding words, a complex process involving thinking, evaluating, judging, reasoning, and problem-solving (Rabia et al., 2017). Cultivating strong reading habits enables students to enhance their critical thinking skills and expand their knowledge base, ultimately contributing to academic success.

Numerous studies underscore the significance of reading habits in enhancing students' academic performance. For instance, Padma et al. (2019) highlighted that reading improves the quality of life and fosters intellectual curiosity, with 40% of participants expressing a preference for spending their leisure time engaged in reading. Similarly, Issa et al. (2012) discovered that students' daily reading activities positively impacted their study skills and academic

achievements. However, despite these findings, the influence of external factors such as social media and familial background on reading habits and academic performance remains insufficiently explored.

Theoretical Framework

Numerous theories have been proposed to elucidate the factors affecting students' academic performance. Walberg (1981) pinpointed four essential components prevalent in most educational frameworks: ability, quality of instruction, motivation, and quantity of instruction. Together, these elements significantly influence students' academic outcomes. Keith and Benson (1992) contended that a comprehensive examination of these variables' direct and indirect effects is crucial for fully understanding their impact on academic performance.

Motivation, frequently regarded as the driving force behind learning, is vital in shaping students' reading habits and academic performance. It directs behaviour toward achieving goals and significantly impacts the effort and energy devoted to learning activities. This intrinsic drive shapes students' willingness to engage with academic materials, ultimately influencing their academic success.

Reading Habits and Academic Performance

Educational research has consistently documented the connection between reading habits and academic performance. Gaona and González (2011) identified a significant positive correlation between students' reading habits and academic success. This finding was further corroborated by Rabia et al. (2017) and Kwakye et al. (2020), who demonstrated that effective study habits significantly contribute to academic achievement. Additionally, Sharma and Vyas (2016) highlighted the importance of good study habits for students' success, noting that poor habits often result in unsatisfactory academic outcomes.

The family background, school environment, and the influence of teachers are pivotal factors in shaping students' reading habits. Bano et al. (2018) emphasized that these external elements significantly impact students' reading behaviours, affecting their academic performance. Nurturing a positive reading culture within educational institutions cannot be overstated. Furthermore, Erlina et al. (2019) noted a strong correlation between effective study habits and academic success, highlighting the necessity of promoting good reading practices among students of all genders. Ezeala (2020) emphasized encouraging students to borrow books from libraries regularly to foster good reading habits. Firnas et al. (2021) affirmed that students with strong reading habits tend to demonstrate improved academic performance.

However, the growing reliance on digital resources brings both opportunities and challenges. Oyewole and Adegoke (2018) identified a positive correlation between library time and academic performance, while excessive internet use was linked to lower academic achievement. The result highlights the necessity for a balanced approach between digital and traditional reading practices.

Gender Differences in Reading Habits and Academic Performance

Research on gender differences in study habits and academic performance has produced mixed findings. Onabamiro and Odunlami (2017) identified significant differences in academic performance between male and female students, although their study habits did not vary considerably. In contrast, Awobajo (2006) reported no significant gender-based differences in academic performance, noting that male students outperformed their female counterparts. Similar conclusions were drawn by Uwakwe et al. (2000), indicating that gender may not serve as a consistent predictor of study habits or academic success. However, Sharma and Vyas (2016) found that girls outperformed boys in academic achievement, underscoring the potential influence of gender on study habits and learning outcomes.

Hypothesis

H₁: There is a significant relationship between reading habits and academic performance.

H₂: There is a significant impact of reading habits on academic performance.

H₃: There is a significant impact of gender on reading habits.

H₄: There is a significant impact of gender on academic performance.

Reading habit

Reading habits play a crucial role in shaping students' academic performance, serving as a foundation for acquiring knowledge and developing cognitive skills (Firnas et al., 2021). Reading habit influences the evolution of one's

personal development and social progress. Effective reading habits not only enhance critical thinking, imagination, and problem-solving abilities but also foster personal growth and social progress (Rabia et al., 2017).

Academic performance

Academic performance is a key indicator of students' educational success and their ability to apply acquired knowledge and skills in various contexts. It is often measured through grades, test scores, and overall achievements in formal education settings (Fernas et al., 2021). Several factors influence academic performance, including students' reading habits, study methods, motivation, and the quality of instruction they receive (Walberg, 1981).

Research Methods

The study applied descriptive and explanatory design to address the research objectives. Descriptive research provided a systematic portrayal of patterns, trends, and characteristics within the study population, ensuring an accurate representation of data (Kothari, 2004). Complementarily, an explanatory design was utilized to investigate causal relationships, specifically examining how reading habits (independent variable) influence academic performance (dependent variable) among college students (Saunders et al., 2016).

A convenience sampling technique was applied to select 390 participants from the target population of college students, chosen for its practicality and efficiency in accessing a readily available sample (Etikan et al., 2016). Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire divided into sections capturing demographic details, reading habits, and academic performance metrics. A 5-point Likert scale was employed to quantify respondents' attitudes and perceptions, a method validated for its reliability in social science research (Likert, 1932). Of the 390 distributed questionnaires, 342 (87.7%) were returned complete and usable, ensuring robust data representativeness. Statistical analyses included descriptive statistics (mean, median, standard deviation) to summarize data, and inferential techniques (correlation and regression) to assess relationships and predict academic performance based on reading habits (Field, 2018).

Results

Gender of respondents

Table 1
The gender of the respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	150	43.9
Female	192	56.1
Total	342	100

As evident from Table 1 there are no equal participants in terms of gender. There were 342 respondents for the study. Out of 342 respondents, 150 were male and the remaining 192 were female. The results showed that there were a smaller number of males than females in the sample. Among all the respondents, the majority 56.1 percent of respondents were female while the rest 43.9 percent of the respondents were male.

Education level respondents

Table 2 depicts respondents' profiles based on strata of education level. Out of 342 respondents, 81 respondents were +2 level students, and 261 respondents were bachelor level students.

As shown in Table 2, the highest percent of participants in terms of education level were represented by bachelor level consisting 76.3 percent remaining 23.7 percent of respondents were +2 level students.

Table 2
Education level respondents

Education level	Frequency	Percentage
+2	81	23.7
Bachelor	261	76.3
Total	342	100

Response of enjoy reading**Table 3**
Do you have a reading habit?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	276	80.7
No	66	19.3
Total	342	100

Table 3 depicts respondents' profiles based on enjoying reading habits. Out of 342 respondents, 276 respondents said yes, and 66 respondents said no. As shown in Table 3, the highest percent of participants in terms of enjoying reading by respondents with 80.7 percent, and the remaining 19.3 percent was not as the answer of respondents.

Response on peer group influence to read**Table 4**
Does your peer group influence you to read?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	252	73.7
No	90	26.3
Total	342	100

Table 4 depicts respondents' profiles based on strata of how peer group influences to read. Out of 342 students, 252 responded with yes and 90 responded with no.

As shown in Table 2.5, the highest percentage of participants in terms of how peer groups influenced them to read were represented with yes, consisting of 73.7 percent, remaining 26.3 percent responded with no.

Response to college has a study-friendly library**Table 5**
Does your college have a friendly library?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	210	61.4
No	132	38.6
Total	342	100

Table 5 depicts respondents' profiles on the question; does your college have a friendly library? Out of 342 respondents, 210 respondents said yes, and 132 respondents said no.

As shown in Table 5, the highest percentages of participants in terms of study-friendly libraries were represented by yes, consisting of 61.4 percent, with the remaining 38.6 percent of respondents saying no.

Response to family helps to enhance the reading habit**Table 6**
Does your family help you enhance your reading habits?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	279	81.6
No	63	18.4
Total	342	100

Table 6 depicts respondents' profiles on the question; does your family enhance your reading habit? Out of 114 respondents, 93 respondents said yes, 21 respondents said no.

As shown in Table 6, the highest percentage of participants in terms of family-enhancing reading habits of students, the highest were represented with yes, consisting 81.6 percent remaining 18.4 percent of respondents said no.

Response on perception about reading

Table 7
What is your perception about reading?

	N	Percent
Difficult	87	13.10
Boring	96	14.40
Enjoyable	174	26.10
Interesting	186	27.90
Rewarding	123	18.50
Total	342	100

Table 7 depicts respondents' profiles based on strata of student's perception of reading. Out of 342 respondents, 87 respondents said it's difficult, 96 said it's boring, 174 said it's enjoyable, 186 said it's interesting, and 123 said it's rewarding. As shown in Table 2.8, the highest percentage of participants in terms of students' perception of reading habits were difficult by consisting 13.10 percent, boring at 14.4 percent, enjoyable at 26.10 percent, interesting at 27.90 percent, interesting by 27.90 percent and the remaining 18.50 is rewarding.

Response on the main purpose of reading

Table 8
What is your main purpose of reading?

Response	Frequency	Percent
For assignments and coursework	120	35.1
For self-development	222	64.9
Total	342	100

Table 8 depicts respondents' profiles based on strata of students' purpose of reading. Out of 342 respondents, 120 respondents said for assignments and course work, and the remaining 222 said for self-development.

As shown in Table 8, the highest percentage of participants in terms of purpose of reading were for assignment and course work, 35.1 percent, and the remaining 64.9 percent of respondents were for self-development.

Survey on reading habit

Table 9
Reading habit

Statements	Response						WV	WM
	SD	D	N	A	SA	TR		
I believe reading habit is a channel for gaining real-world knowledge.	24	33	54	153	78	342	1254	3.67
I feel that a reading habit improves intellectual knowledge.	12	15	39	52	120	342	1383	4.04
I think reading habits enhance IQ knowledge in everyday life.	1	30	24	57	114	342	1389	4.06
Grand weighted mean								3.92

Table 9 shows that a maximum number of respondents with a weighted mean score of 3.67 strongly agreed that they believe reading habit is a channel for gaining real-world knowledge. The respondents also agreed that they feel reading habit improves intellectual knowledge with a weighted mean value of 4.04.

Likewise, the majority of the respondents also agreed that they think reading habits enhance IQ knowledge in everyday life with a weighted mean of 4.06. Therefore, the grand weighted mean for the mean statement associated with the reading habit is 3.92.

*Survey on academic performance***Table 10**
Academic performance

Statements	Responses					TR	WV	WM
	SD	D	D	A	SA			
I feel reading habit has improved my presentation skills.	6	39	66	132	99	342	1305	3.82
I think my reading habit has helped to raise my GPA.	9	27	60	165	81	342	1308	3.83
I feel my productivity in classroom activities has increased due to my reading habits.	6	45	51	174	66	342	1272	3.73
Grand weighted mean								3.79

Table 10 shows that a maximum number of respondents with a weighted mean score of 3.82 strongly agreed that they feel reading habits have improved their presentation skills.

The respondents also agreed that they believe reading habits have helped to raise their GPA with a weighted mean value of 3.82. Likewise, the majority of the respondent also agreed that they feel their productivity in classroom activities has increased due to reading habits.

Table 11
Descriptive statistics

Statistics	N	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation	Variance
Reading habit	342	3.92	4	4	0.8	0.64
Academic performance	342	3.79	4	4	0.79	0.62

Table 11 reveals the descriptive status for the whole sample. It is found that the mean value for the independent variable reading habit is the highest among the two variables with a mean of 3.92 and the dependent variable academic performance with a mean value of 3.79.

Similarly, median values for reading habit and academic performance are 4 and 4 respectively. Mode is also found to be equal in both reading habit and academic performance with the value of 4 and 4 respectively. Standard deviation and variance are found to be highest in reading habits with 0.80 and 0.64 and lowest in academic performance with values of 0.79 and 0.62.

Table 12
Independent sample T-test

Variable	Gender	Number	Mean	Std deviation	P- Value
Reading habit	Male	150	3.76	0.72	0.051
	Female	192	3.98	0.58	
Academic performance	Male	150	3.82	0.54	0.036
	Female	192	3.77	0.63	

Table 12 revealed that there is no difference in the reading habits across male and female because the p-value is 0.053, which is greater than 0.05. Similarly, there is a difference in academic performance between male and female because the p-value is 0.036 less than 0.05.

Table 13
Correlation analysis

Variables	Reading habit	Academic Performance
Reading habit	1	
Academic performance	.586**	1
	(0.001)	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 13 characterizes the correlation analysis of the variables under study which is conducted for the whole sample. As shown in the table, the correlation for all the samples between reading habits and academic performance is observed to be an accepted null hypothesis with a correlation coefficient of 0.586 which ultimately means there is a significant relationship between reading habits and academic performance.

Regression result

Table: 14
Regression analysis

	Coefficient	Sig
(Constant)	1.0265	0.003
Reading habits	0.252	0.016
R ²	0.021	
F value	18.74	

The regression analysis revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between reading habits and academic performance ($\beta = 0.252$, $p = 0.016$), indicating that a one-unit increase in reading habits is associated with a 0.252-unit improvement in academic performance, holding other factors constant. The model explained 2.1% of the variance in academic performance ($R^2 = 0.021$), suggesting that while reading habits contribute to academic outcomes, other unmeasured variables may play a more substantial role. The F-value of 18.74 ($p < 0.05$) confirmed the overall statistical significance of the model. However, the low R^2 highlights the need for further research to identify additional predictors of academic success.

Table 15
Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis statement	Decision
H1: There is a significant relationship between reading habits and academic performance.	Accepted
H2: There is a significant impact of reading habits on students' academic performance.	Accepted
H3: There is a significant impact of gender on reading habits.	Accepted
H4: There is a significant impact of gender on academic performance.	Rejected

Findings and Discussion

This study found that gender significantly impacts reading habits. This is not in line with Uwakwe, Oke, and Aire (2000) and Awobajo (2006), who found no significant difference between male and female students' study habits. The study also showed that gender has no significant impact on academic performance. The result aligns with Awobajo (2006), who found no significant difference in academic performance in male and female students.

As a result, reading habits have a significant relationship with academic performance in college students. The result is congruent with (Gaona & González, 2011), which found reading habits have a positive relationship with the frequency of library attendance and academic performance. The result is similar to Acheaw and Larson (2014), Erlina et al. (2019), and Firnas et al. (2021), who showed that there is a relationship between reading habits and academic performance. The findings are also similar to those of Kiran (2019), who identified a negative relationship between students' reading habits, teaching behaviour, and academic achievements. The result stated that reading habits affect academic performance. Florence (2012) and Larson (2014) also support this result, finding a positive effect of home environmental factors and peer pressure on students to adopt a better reading habit. This finding is almost similar to Padma, Ramasamy, and Rose (2019), who analyzed the effective role of the library in promoting reading habits in the reader's development of values, attitudes, and appreciation.

Conclusion

This study underscores reading habits' critical role in shaping college students' academic success. The findings reveal a robust positive relationship between reading habits and academic performance, demonstrating that students who engage in consistent reading activities achieve significantly better outcomes. While gender influenced reading habits with notable differences in preferences and frequency between male and female students, academic performance remained unaffected by gender, suggesting that both groups perform comparatively when accounting for reading practices. These results emphasize that fostering strong reading habits, irrespective of gender, is a pivotal strategy for enhancing academic achievement. Educational institutions and policymakers are encouraged to prioritize initiatives that promote regular reading. These initiatives, such as access to resources, structured reading programs, and peer-driven motivational strategies, are crucial in bridging gaps and supporting equitable academic success. They inspire hope and motivate action, showing that change is possible and within reach.

Action implications

These findings underscore reading habits' pivotal role in driving academic success among college students, with direct implications for educational practices and policy. Academic institutions must prioritize creating supportive environments such as well-equipped libraries, accessible reading resources, and study-friendly spaces to cultivate consistent reading behaviours. Teachers play a critical role in motivating students through guided reading activities, mentorship, and integrating reading into curricula, as their influence directly shapes students' attitudes toward reading. Policymakers should advocate for structured programs, such as reading clubs or incentives, to institutionalize reading as a core academic habit. Additionally, the study highlights the need for further research into gender-specific reading preferences and the longitudinal impacts of reading interventions. By aligning efforts across these areas, stakeholders can bridge academic achievement gaps and empower students to thrive through enhanced reading practices.

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