

RECREATIONAL READING HABIT OF COLLEGE FRESHMEN IN RELATION TO THEIR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

This study attempted to look into the significant relationship between the recreational reading habits and the academic performance of the first year college students. Specifically, it sought responses to determine relationship of the selected variables such as the gender and areas of specialization with the respondents' recreational reading habits.

A survey questionnaire served as the instrument to collect data from the respondents for their profile and questions relative to their reading preferences for recreation and the amount of reading time spent weekly in two separate periods: in session and on vacation. The results from this questionnaire and the academic grades were tabulated and analyzed using the percentage system, weighted mean, Chi-square test and Pearson Product Moment Correlation.

The findings revealed a significant relationship between the academic performance and the recreational reading habits of the respondents in session and on vacation. There were no significant differences between the variables --gender and areas of specialization -- and the reading habits of the respondents. Their academic grades clustered on average level. More than half of the total respondents spent one to two hours per week for their recreational reading. As to their reading preferences, the frequently read by them are magazines, letters, non-fiction, newspapers, short story, and internet.

Since the study shows a positive correlation between recreational reading habits and academic standing, it is vital for the school administration, the faculty, student organizations, and even the community to uphold more recreational reading programs. They need to strengthen motivating factors to promote culture for reading and establish interest groups and venues for recreational purposes. The incorporation of in-class recreational readings and provision of more exposure to reading materials within the reach of the students may enable them to become more capable and quality young educators.

INTRODUCTION

Academic reading is certainly a relevant factor in the learning performance of the students. The effectiveness and positive relationship between the two –*reading and performance* –become evident from the elementary to the college levels in various language skills development, namely, comprehension, vocabulary building, spelling, writing style, and grammar. Reading is undeniably a cornerstone for success not just in school but throughout life. It is

indeed the key to lifetime learning with naturally the simultaneous application of other skills, particularly listening, speech and writing. (Tonjes and Zints, 1992; Krashen, 1993; Gallik, 1999; Kaur and Thiyagarajah, 1999; Bell, 2001; Patterson and Proust, 2008) .

Evidently, students do read a lot especially if the reading task is part of their academic requirements. They spend quite an amount of time, even sleepless nights before examinations to pass the subject and eventually complete the course. But will academic reading suffice to achieve their ultimate goal of getting a good paying job? How many of them read for pleasure? Other than the textbooks purchased to comply with their reading requirements, have they voluntarily read a variety of magazines, newspapers, novels, poetry and many more with interest and enjoyment?

The kind of reading which this particular study investigated from among the freshmen is the recreational reading. It refers to an array of fun reading activities in which students freely engage in self-directed reading on a wide range of interesting topics. (Hung,2002) Recreational readers aged three to 60 indicate some reasons for pleasure reading: first, they read to check reality; second, they read to escape; and third, they read to learn specific skills of information. (Cohen, 2008)

There have been several studies pointing out the significant benefits of recreational reading to academic attainments. Lauback Litscape reports (2002) show that recreational reading has cognitive effects as it improves skill and strategy, builds fluency and enlarges vocabulary. Furthermore, the said reports (Patterson and Proust 2008) indicates strong correlation between pleasure reading and academic excellence as noted in the following results: 1) voluntary readers are better readers and writers than non-readers; 2) children and teenagers who read for pleasure on a daily or weekly basis score better on reading tests than infrequent readers; and 3) frequent readers also score better on writing tests than non-readers or infrequent readers.

Krashen (1993; 2004) emphasized likewise the importance of reading throughout one's lifespan for it has been found to be the springboard to improve reading comprehension, writing style, vocabulary, spelling and grammatical development. He noticed that those who wrote highly competent essays engaged in more pleasure reading at all ages, especially high school. For him, recreational reading or reading for pleasure is the major source of reading competence, and the missing link that makes harder reading and more demanding input more comprehensible.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The main concern of this study was to examine any significant relationship between the recreational reading habits and academic performance of the first year students in the College of Education. Specifically, it aimed to find out answers to the following sub-problems:

1. What is the respondents' profile as to gender, area of specialization, and levels of academic performance?
2. How much time do the respondents spend to read recreationally per week in session and on vacation?
3. Is there a relationship between the variables as to gender, area of specialization, levels of academic performance, and the recreational reading habits of the respondents in session and on vacation?
4. What are the interests and preferences of the respondents for their recreational reading?

HYPOTHESIS

There is significant relationship between the variables of the study as to the respondents' gender, areas of specialization, levels of academic performance, and the recreational reading habits—in session and on vacation.

Keywords: *Academic Performance; Habit; In-session; On-vacation; Recreational Reading; Recreational Reading Habit; Reading Interests*

The illustration that follows present the Input-Process-Output (IPO) flow of the entire study from its starting phase to the finality, thus:

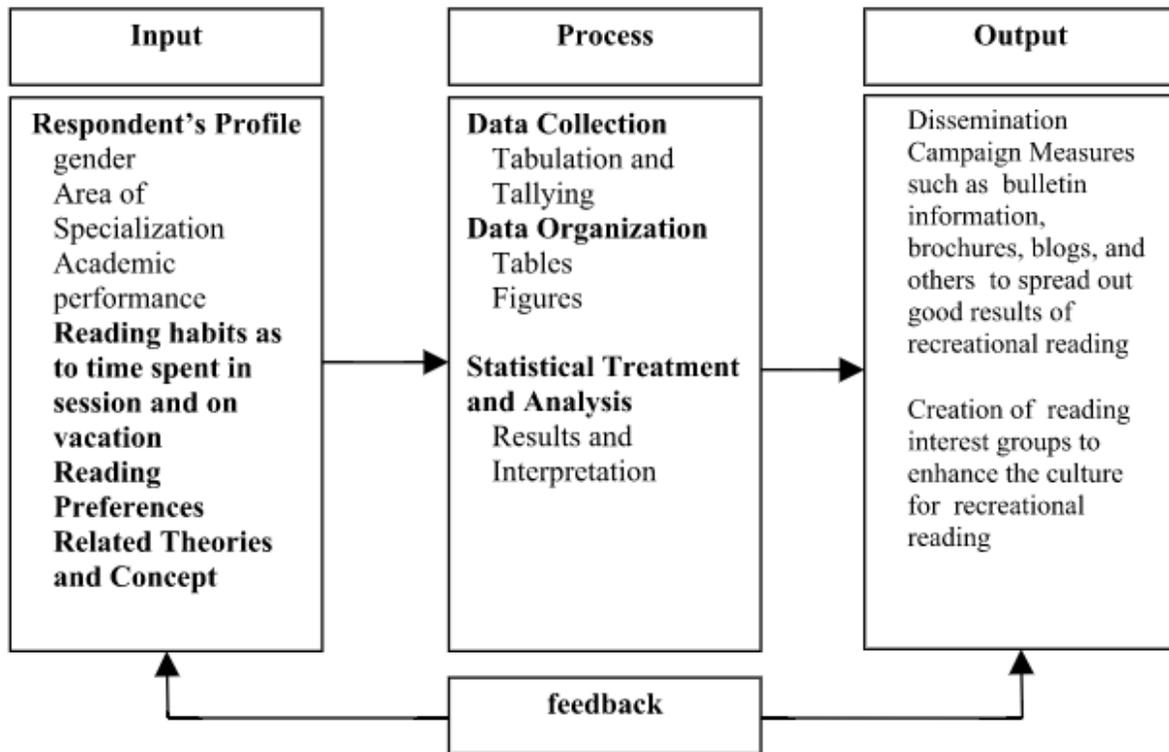


Figure 1. Research Paradigm

In this study, an adherence to any motivational and promotional measures geared towards enhanced recreatory strategies and provision of more opportunities, exposure, and recreational reading materials within the reach of the respondents are thus recommended.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The respondents of this study were 405 first year students of the College of Education (CED) of the two campuses. Boni (80.25%) and Pasig (19.75%), of the Rizal Technological University (RTU). This population comprised 70.68% of the entire populace of 478, short of 73 students only as retrieved from the Registrar through Electronic Data Processing (EDP) section. There was no sampling done since all the enrolled freshmen in CED were the respondents in the present study. Only a few names, however, were disregarded because their grades in eight content subjects were at that point in time not complete. Their academic performance levels were obtained by averaging the final grades in English, Mathematics, Sociology, Humanities, Education, Psychology, Natural Science I and Filipino.

The respondents' areas of specializations and enrolment figures are as follows: Computer, 68 students; Mathematics, 52; Filipino, 71; English 114; Social Studies/History, 49; and Physical Science, 47. The bulk of the students came from the area of English which was 28.15% of the entire number of CED freshmen. The smallest size of population was the group of Physical Science with 11.60% . In Pasig Campus, the same major areas were offered except for the Computer course.

The descriptive method was used in this study where most of the data needed were gathered through a survey that collected information about the respondents' age, gender, preferences, and the amount of time spent in recreational reading.

The instrument used was patterned after the standardized survey questions of Gallik (1999) on Recreational Reading Habits published by the *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* of the International Reading Association (IRA). Some modifications were made, particularly questions that asked for the cumulative grades, honors obtained, and one unfamiliar item on Learning Support Services which could be translated in the Philippine School setting as a student assistant. The minor modifications made for this present study suited the needs, setting, and culture of the respondents. The modified form of the instrument underwent a review by some faculty members in the College prior to its *dry run* to about five students. No inquiries were raised and no problems were confronted in the try-out process.

The survey forms from the 405 students in both Pasig and Boni campuses were tallied using the Microsoft Excel Software. Upon the completion of the tallied data, the researcher sought assistance from the experts on the selection of statistical treatment to facilitate analysis. The results were organized and presented through tables and some with pie charts. Each graphic was described, analyzed, and interpreted in accordance with the sequence of sub problems in the study.

All the data from the survey were tallied, tabulated and presented in graphs and tables. The statistical treatment for the data would vary based on the required analysis. For the frequency and summary distribution, percentage served the purpose. To find out significant relationships of the variables as stated in the hypothesis of this study, the researcher used the Chi-square test and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The t-test was also applied to validate the significance of the relativity between the variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This particular section presents and analyzes the answers to the sub-problems of the study in their order as follows: the profile of the respondents as to gender, major areas of

specialization, and levels of academic performance; the amount of time spent by the respondents on their recreational reading in two separate periods—in session and on vacation; relationship of the variables (gender, areas of specialization, levels of academic performance) on the recreational reading habits; and, the reading interest and preferences of the respondents.

Respondents' Profile

There were six areas of the respondents' specialization with the corresponding gender distribution of 310 for females and 95 for males having the percentages of 23.46 and 76.54 respectively. As expected, the College of Education was dominantly populated by female as it was generally perceived to be a course for the women. Teaching itself is a task suitably meant “for the girls” and “not for the boys” since the nature of work plus the classroom setting seems to replicate a home with a woman to play the mother's role. Perception though but this is certainly a reality especially in the basic educational system of the Philippines where female teachers are preferred than the male ones.

Of the CED Freshmen's specializations, it was the English major area that obtained the biggest percentage of 28.15 which comprised 114 students. Next to this area, the Filipino specialization had about 71 students with a percentage of 17.53. The group that follows is the Computer Education area with 68 students (16.79%). As noted, the other areas of specialization had smaller populations of 56, 49, 47 distributed respectively to Mathematics, Social Studies (formerly History) and Physical Science (formerly General Science).

Almost one-third of the entire CED populace (35.31%) that is 143 obtained the numerical grades of 2.25 and 2.24 with the equivalent of 83 and 84. This grade bracket belonged to an average or fair ratings, thus, classifying many of the respondents in combined major areas to be on the average level of academic status. A much lower grade level of 2.5-2.74 with the value of 80-82 was obtained by the 109 respondents. Only four respondents got the higher grades of 1.5-1.74 and a handful of seven reached the first two higher grades from 94-99 grade scale. With this academic profile of the CED freshmen, it could be inferred that only a handful excelled in their academic work. The majority, however, belonged to the fair standing category which is generally meant to be on the average level.

Amount of Time Spent for Recreational Reading

One of the highlights asked to the respondents in the survey was the amount of time—as specifically stated in the sub problems of this study as the number of hours—spent weekly for their recreational reading in two different periods: while classes were in session and while they

were on vacation. As emphasized earlier, the recreational reading habit pertains to the free-willing use of the time to spend in reading for recreation on regular basis.

As noted in Figure 2, more than half of them, 51.50% or 209 respondents spent only 1-2 hours weekly for their free reading while a little less than half, that is 36.54% answered they spent only an hour weekly for their pleasure reading. Very few chose 3-5 hours and over per week for their recreational reading *in session*.

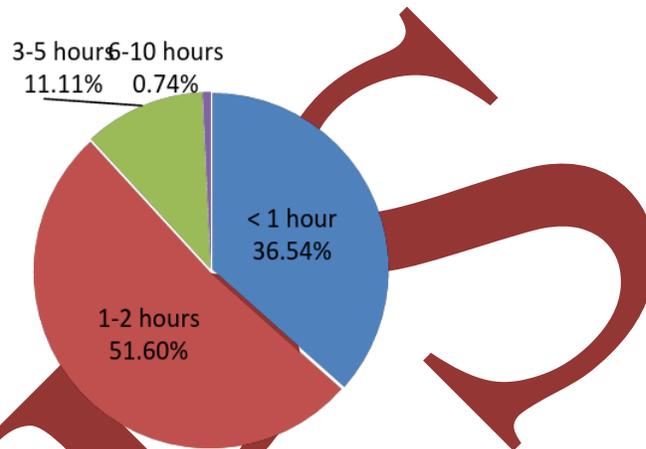


Figure 2. Hours spent for Recreational Reading while in Class Session

Figure 3 explicitly indicates the same time frames, 1-2 per week as the preferred amount of time for pleasure reading weekly by only 166 respondents (40.99%), a little short of the half of the entire populace. One hundred twenty three (30.47%) still chose an hour per week for their voluntary reading; however, an increased percentage was noted of the readers who chose 3-5 hours spent weekly during vacation once compared with the readers in-session. The data shown in this figure indicate 45 respondents (11.11%) while had 99 respondents (24.44%) for their 3-5 hours of voluntary reading. This means that more reading time was expected among the readers during vacation. It further implies that the absence of the pressures of their academic work on vacation may mean ample time for them to do more voluntary form of reading.

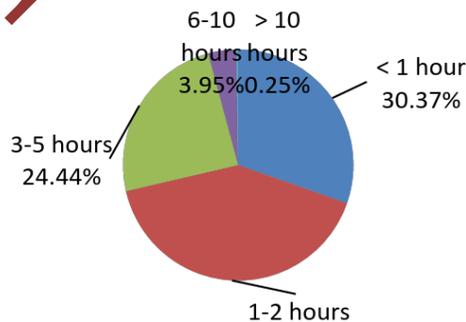


Figure 3. Hours Spent for Recreational Reading on Vacation

Gender and Specialization Areas in Relation to Reading Habits

Using the chi-square calculation, the researcher attempted to find out whether any statistically significant relationship existed between the number of reading hours spent for recreational reading and the variables in terms of the gender and areas of specialization.

The results show no significant relationships in the amount of time spent in session and during vacation due to gender differences. Table 1 illustrates the results of the computed chi-square values of the said data. In some related studies, leisure reading among fifth and sixth graders was sustained and consistently pursued by both girls and boys for fun.

Table 1. Gender in Relation to Reading Habits

GENDER	TOTAL (fe)	In Session	On Vacation
		TOTAL (x^2)	TOTAL (x^2)
Male	95	3.74	1.62
Female	310	1.14	1.19
TOTAL	405	4.88	2.81

**not significant*

**not significant* $P_{a 0.05} = 9.49$

There was no statistically significant relationship observed in the amount of reading time spent in session and during vacation due to areas of specialization (refer to Table 2). The computed values of 24.281 and 20.152 were found lesser than the critical values of 9.49 and 31.41 at 0.05 level of significance. The hypothesis tested was rejected and this further means that pleasure reading or any voluntary reading for that matter could be performed with or without intervening factors such as time element associated with their areas of specialization. Although in school, they would likely be reading more recreationally given the opportunity as there would be access of more interesting materials. (Krashen, 2004)

Table 2. Specialization Areas in Relation to Reading Habits

Areas of Specialization	TOTAL (fe)	In Session	On Vacation
		TOTAL (x^2)	TOTAL (x^2)
Computer	68	5.78	1.81
Mathematics	56	0.8	6.66
Filipino	71	10.171	1.76
English	114	1.46	0.84
Physical Science	47	4.42	1.75
Social Studies	49	1.65	7.332
TOTAL	405	24.281	20.152

**not significant*

**not significant*

$P_{a 0.05} = 31.41$

Academic Performance in Relation to Reading Habits

Two statistical treatments for the data were used to test significant relationship between recreational reading habits in terms of the number of hours spent weekly in two separate periods *-in session and on vacation --* and levels of academic performance. Pearson Product Moment Correlation tested the alternative hypothesis on the significant relationship between these variables of the study.

The results shown in Table 3 and 4 indicate a significant relationship between the recreational reading habits as to the amount of time spent weekly in session and on vacation. The Pearson's r computations showed the results of 0.37 and 0.19 respectively which both depicted positive correlational values. The significance of r was tested by using t-test formula. Thus, the computed values of 7.99 (in-session) and 3.38 (on-vacation) are found greater than the critical value of 1.684 at 0.05 level of significance. This accepts the alternative hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between the academic performance of the students and their recreational reading habits.

Table 3. Correlation and Level of Significance Between Academic Performance and Recreational Reading Habits (In-Session)

Variable	Pearson's r	Significance
Academic Performance vs. Recreational Reading Habits	0.37	0.05

Table 4. Correlation and Level of Significance Between Academic Performance and Recreational Reading Habits (On-Vacation))

Variable	Pearson's r	Significance
Academic Performance vs. Recreational Reading Habits	0.19	0.05

This only shows that reading habits in terms of the reading hours spent weekly for recreation contributed significantly in the academic performance of the students. This further means that as the reading time spent for recreation increases, the academic performance also increases. In fact, there had been several studies that confirm strong relationship between the two variables. Individuals who engage in reading for recreation on a daily or weekly basis score better on examinations than the infrequent readers. As the students read less and less, their levels of academic performance become lower. Proficient readers with strong comprehension skills accumulate personal, professional, and social advantages while less proficient readers run higher risks of failure in all these areas. (Patterson and Proust, 2008)

The significant relationship between the reading habits as to the amount of time spent weekly for recreational reading on vacation and in session indicates a favorable response to the question generally asked to the respondents: “Do you read for pleasure?” This seems to be relevant and functional although pleasure reading according to Gallik (1999) is in itself not a strong predictor of achievement in the academe. For him, there are other empirical ways to assess not only the significance but also the intensity of the relationship between the reading habit and the academic performance among the respondents.

READING PREFERENCES FOR RECREATION

Reading for pleasure is significantly related to better academic performance. Several studies show that a favorably significant relationship exists between the college students’ academic standing and their habit of spending more time in their recreational reading. (Gauder et al., 2007; Krashen, 2004; Shin, 2004; Hendel and Harrold, 2004)

Another important query was asked in the survey without the intention of any hypothetical analysis. This concerns the reading preferences of the respondents for their recreation. They were asked to choose one item only out of the list of reading materials under three options -*rarely, sometimes, and frequently*. The most number of choices of the respondents fell in the category of “sometimes” which suggests that although they read these materials for their recreation, it seems to reflect inadequate interest in performing the activity.

Given the weights in the options on reading preferences such as one (1) for rarely; two (2) for sometimes, and, three (3) for frequently, the data indicate almost similar results. The poetry, comic books, and novels were identified the least frequently used materials for pleasure reading as shown by the “sometimes” responses. The ones more frequently read by the respondents for recreation were letters, magazines, non-fiction (preferably religion, history, science), short story, newspapers, and internet.

CONCLUSION

Majority of the respondents’ academic grades obtained within a semestral work cluster on the average level category. If not given utmost importance, this level of academic performance by the students may affect to a lower status the goals of any institution towards excellence and attainment of highly-competitive graduates.

As to time preferences, specifically the number of hours spent in reading for recreation in two separate periods- *in session and on vacation*—the responses cluster between one to two hours only per week. This means that their reading habits as to the amount of time used for their recreational reading may not complement the demands and pressures of their academic work.

The results indicate no significant relationship in the variables once grouped as to gender, and major areas of specialization in relation to the recreational reading habits of the respondents

in session and during vacation. However, a significant positive relationship exists when these reading hours in two periods—*in session and on vacation*--as focus of the recreational habits of the respondents are computed in relation with the academic performance of the respondents.

This significant correlational value between the academic performance and the recreational habits implies a closer association of the two variables, that is, the presence of one indicates the presence of the other. The correlation further suggests that a higher or better level of academic performance can be associated with the increased number of reading hours spent for recreation. Thus, the lesser hours spent for pleasure reading result to the lower or poorer academic performance level.

The CED freshmen, being the sole respondents of this study, have varying interests and attitudes as to preferences for their recreational reading materials. As noted, they do read for pleasure a variety of materials but only when they feel like doing it as reflected in their most frequent response of “sometimes.” In the order of their choices as frequently read are letters, magazines, non-fiction, newspapers, short story, and internet. Sometimes preferred by them for their recreational readings are novels, poetry, and comics.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Though recreational reading is voluntary, there must be some measures or actions to be done by the concerned particularly the school officials, and the language faculty so that the students are encouraged to do this on a greater capacity.

Reading, be it voluntary or required, enhances academic standing, hence, a need to prioritize it in the language programs of the school. There should be a provision of more reading materials in the most accessible manner to the students to facilitate recreational reading especially while they are in school. These reading materials are out of their sight the moment they stay home especially during vacation. Their preference to work during vacation may hamper their interest and habit to read more recreationally.

In-class recreational readings must be incorporated in the regular sessions while a variety of extensive readings must be monitored in such a way that they do not become academic burdens. The faculty must consider some motivating factors that will entice the students to read more at their most convenient time in the most pleasurable manner to enable them gain better results in all their academic tasks. This should be strongly adhered to and advocated while the students are within the school community.

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